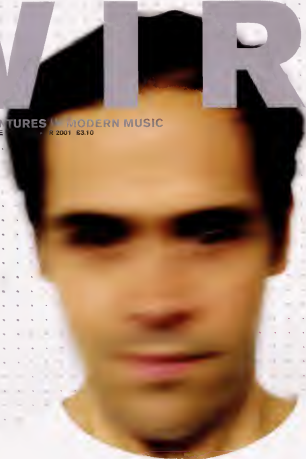


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as, as Hua Hsiao points out in a review on page 69, is hardly up to expressing real, earth shattering catastrophe. When the planes hit the towers and the day went into freefall, as we monitored the ensuing atrocities of 11 September via the Net and the TV set in the pub next door, *The Wire's* little corner of world culture suddenly felt more remote than ever. But then communications started coming in to make us realise that very few places are completely unaffected. Sasha Freere Jones, the author of this month's *Primer* on the Wu-Tang Clan, lives on Broadway, only a few blocks from Ground Zero — he checked in to offer severely qualified reassurance: "We're OK, but I'm not sure what OK means." He had witnessed the second plane crash while taking his son to school. And then the communications began to come in: Marcus Bon, who interviews Henry Hunt on page 24, was also an eye witness. He posted a sequence of thoughtful and moving views from the rooftop in the following day. The *Wire's* editor, Mike Sorkin, wrote a report that Thurston Moore was safe in Massachusetts, but Kim Gordon had been in their Manhattan apartment preparing to leave that afternoon for a show in Paris. The Sonic Youth studio is located just three blocks away from the World Trade Center, and without any direct access they were fearing the worst for their equipment. Jim O'Rourke, asleep in the SY studio, was caught up in the blast. He had run to Thurston and Kim's apartment through darkened, dustfilled streets.

and later left town. Sulcide, due to embark on a European tour at the end of September, had their rehearsal space flattened under the rubble – though neither Alan Vega nor Martin Rev were harmed. La Monte Young and Manan Zazeela's Dream House is on Church Street, a comparatively safe 12 blocks back from Ground Zero, but they still witnessed the collapsing buildings – they had just finished pruning their bonsai trees.

Musical life in New York may have been altered for the long term. Certainly the city's musical geography has already been rearranged. The Knitting Factory, due to celebrate its 15th anniversary in February next year, was off 11ms even to its employees as we went to press — see www.knittingfactory.com for updates on their attempts to relocate. The Tonic Website wasn't even functioning, but the venue's schedule was hastily replaced with benefit shows for the Red Cross — devastatingly intense affairs without doubt, featuring John Zorn's Masses, Dave Douglas Woness, Mifford Grimes & Bill Lawell. One thinks of the great jazz clubs of the 1950s and 60s in the heart of Manhattan: a musical history pulsed. Neither should we forget that the Windows On The World restaurant at the very top of the WTC's North Tower was used over the past few years as a live venue — Spiritualized and Stephen Veltro were among the artists who made appearances at what must have been a phenomenal venue. Veltro even made an album of sounds sourced from the

WTC's shell itself, recorded with a special scanning device. Which, in turn – since rational thought is a scarce resource at a time like this – regurgitates a memory of the arch modernist composer Elliott Carter in an interview a few years ago, describing how, on a blustery day, he loved to watch the twin towers, which he could see distantly from his own apartment, perceptibly bending towards each other.

In London, of course, our work continues, with the stakes on musical content raised as never before in living memory. Silent mourning is the protocol for the aftermath of such events, naturally. But if there is time for music amongst the horror and the escalating global situation, then the appearance this month of John Coltrane's *Olutunji* Concert, supposedly the last recorded date by the saxophonist a few months before his death, sounded even before the attacks on America like one of the most convincing depictions of hysterical raging against the dying of the light you could possibly imagine. Emanating from a psychic zone way deeper than mere representation, the calumnious, confrontational agony of this incredible recording is certainly the only thing right now that comes anywhere near giving voice to the horror in the face of sharply impending doom. Somewhere between *Olutunji* and Coltrane's great "Alabama" dirge, music like this reminds you that the American soul is well equipped to sing of abject suffering. And transcend it.

ROB. YOUNG

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Letters

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The hair bear bunch: Acid Mothers Temple

Official response

In his response to my review of Miles Davis's *Live At Fillmore East...* (Letters, *The Wire* 211), Ricky Frystak said I was in error for not citing Miles – Festival De Juan Pina (sic) as a “very official” recording (the prefatory 1999 of the album’s title was not italicised in the body of the letter). Contrary to Mr Frystak’s claim, Sony Japan’s 1993 release of the material was unauthorised, causing Davis’s estate to initiate legal action. Eventually, Sony settled with the estate, who in turn compensated the musicians for Sony’s unauthorised use of the material; but this hardly legitimised Sony’s initial release of the material. **Bill Shoemaker** Damascus, USA

Myth the point

The feature on Acid Mothers Temple (*The Wire* 210) started, “everyone who’s seen them live will tell you straight...” and then went on to talk about “reinventing rock music” and other such nonsense. I was squirming with embarrassment reading it. I know *The Wire* likes a bit of mythmaking, but this was ridiculous. The Acid Mothers make loud, noisy rock music with lots of guitars. They haven’t “reinvented” anything. I’ve seen them live twice now, and each time they were upstaged, firstly by Volcano The Bear and secondly by Peter Brötzmann and Hamid Drake, each of whom in their very different ways gave a hugely powerful performance without relying on effects pedals or amplifiers turned to 11 to mesmerise their audience. Acid Mothers remind me of my little brother desperately trying to impress me with his new electric guitar. It’s very nice of Makoto Kawabata to channel the cosmic sounds he receives for us to hear; I only

wish they were a little more interesting. Anyone who’s seen them live will tell you that.
Thomas Mills via email

At no point in the Acid Mothers Temple article did the writer, David Keenan, claim that AMT are “reinventing rock”, as you put it. The second part of the passage you quote actually read: “... Acid Mothers Temple have singlehandedly rebirthed rock in a cartoon not of hair and fuzz”. Which is an entirely different proposition to one which claims they have reinvented the music – Ed

News of the Don

I was pleased to read that your readers still care about Don Ayler. Unfortunately I was a bit disheartened to read Val Wilmer’s response (Letters, *The Wire* 210) about his mental problems. I wish she had mentioned when she attempted to interview Don.

I am a friend of his, and I am pleased to write that he is doing quite well. For someone who will be 60 next year he is in good health. He does not drink, and is working on quitting smoking. The drug use and the mental problems are things of the long past.

Many people forget that Don had quite a career apart from his brother. Shortly before Albert’s death, a Japanese magazine published an interview with Albert. He stated that Don was a better saxophone player than he was (people forget that Don started out on sax). I saw Don play in a Cleveland bar in April 1977 in the Pharaoh Sanders band. He was quite impressive (remember, this is years after his illness). He also recorded a set of three albums in Florence for the Frama label in 1961. They received impressive reviews in the Canadian jazz magazine *Coda*.

I interviewed Don and his father on two separate

occasions over WGSB in 1997. Listeners were impressed with Don and his stories. Admittedly it is a bit difficult to remember details about your work 40 years later. Don was correct about two facts which he did not know I could double check on. For example, he always insisted that “Our Prayer” was played at Coltrane’s funeral. All the books claimed it was “The Truth Is Marching In” (they kept regurgitating an incorrect New York Times article). According to Fujoki’s Coltrane discography published by Scarecrow Press, there exists a tape which does indeed confirm that “Our Prayer” was performed.

Don does still practise the trumpet, and is currently working on a book about the Ayler brothers. I am the co-author, and he gets half the credit as well as half the royalties. One reason he does not do interviews is that he values his privacy. Another reason is that interviewers tend to focus on the sensationalistic aspects of his career, like the illness or his brother’s mysterious death. More importantly, interviews are diluting the potential value of his memoirs. I feel that his life would make a great biopic, especially in the hands of someone like Spike Lee (Don jokes he’d like to see Wesley Snipes play him). If it is given away through interviews it becomes public domain, robbing Don of any potential income. That is another reason for a denial of interviews – he feels he was robbed by Bernard Stoltman, as well as Bob Thiele – he desires to prevent further deadweighting of details.

Right now the book is about 350 pages of manuscripts. After reading Peter Niklas Wilson’s book *Albert Ayler – Spirits Rejoice*, I felt one would have to go the extra mile to be in that good company. Even though Wilson’s analyses (as well as WA Berden’s articles in *Jazz Monthly*, from autumn 1967 to early 68) are impeccable, and it would be redundant to go

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Letters

over that road again, it will feature earlier reviews from long gone jazz magazines which present the divergence of opinions that made Ayler's career so controversial. It will also have a family tree supplied by Ayler's cousin, as well as some pictures of Ayler that even the family never saw. Not many people realise that Ayler's paternal aunt was a gospel singer of note in Cleveland. At a concert which was reviewed in the local papers, she sang many of the songs that Ayler recorded on the *Spiritus* album. I am trying to track down a copy of Ayler's high school yearbook, since I have heard there is a great picture of Ayler on the golf links. So I hope your readers are patient.

Richard J Kolode Seven Hills, USA

All steamed up

I like your magazine. A lot. But on rare occasions you find a way to infuriate me. The last such occurrence was provided by Ben Watkinson, reviewing the two latest Steamboat Switzerland CDs (Soundcheck, The Wire 210). I had not seen such amateurism and preconceived disdain in your pages for a long time. Being an avant garde music reviewer myself, I received the same discs with the same promotional material. Reading the press release, it all became clear: the group made one fatal mistake. They used the expression 'Progressive rock'. Suddenly, the reviewer associated the music with old timers like Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and since it has become necessary in avant circles to put down Prog rock whenever the occasion arises, Steamboat Switzerland paid the price.

I have nothing against Prog rock myself. It was my first non-radio musical experience, it led me to avant garde music and I still enjoy listening to it. But your reviewer clearly did not listen closely to the two discs. Granted, *Budapest* is not their best effort, but *AC/08* (Hayden) has everything their 1998 debut *Live* had, in a more mature and condensed form. What is more important is that the reviewer failed to mention the virtuosity of the musicians – Lucas Niggli is one hell of a drummer, Dominik Blum's Hammond organ playing has nothing to do with John Medeski (of Medeski, Martin & Wood), a reference I find offensive in this context – and the originality of the music. Steamboat Switzerland successfully ally the complexity of Prog rock, the power of Metal and the dizzying void of early minimalism. The simple fact that both CDs were released on Grob, one of the most exciting avant garde labels of the last two years, should have prompted Watson to try to understand what was going on in front of his ears. Then again, that's what happens when you use the cursed word 'Progressive', the most pejorative word in the British music press these days. Genre bashing is a good way to lose credit.

Franois Couture Sherbrooke, Canada

Leave the Guy alone

Is it too late to comment on Mark Sinker's review of *Iscape-Tabeaux* by The Barry Guy New Orchestra (Soundcheck, The Wire 206)? When your reviewer addresses the music he is quite positive, but the overall impression is one of irritation. The cover is dull – and yes, Guy's *Moya* label generally has anger cover art. The title of the piece is unalluring: granted, 'tableaux' is a little unexpected in this area of music, but isn't 'Iscape' an expressive and appropriate word? Horror of horrors, Guy's got some funding from the Irish Arts Council. Some of us are happy that the sector has got a few pounds, and nothing suggests that Guy's music is shaped by a desire for funding.

What really bothers Sinker is that in the title and liner notes there is no overt reference to the liberating power of free music, no statement that Guy is committed to the "total transformation of everything". Does Sinker himself really believe that improvised music has a serious role to play in politically transforming society? I don't know whether Sinker is active in revolutionary politics or whether he's just afraid better about sitting at home listening to a BGN0 recording if, instead of being titled *Iscape-Tabeaux*, it were titled *Viva El Comandante Marcos! Venceremos!*.

From what I have seen and heard of it, Barry Guy's musical practice could be summed up in this way: the perpetual search for new contexts and forms for the music; extraordinary attention to the individual voice and technique of those he's playing with; music making with, not egotistically against, other players; uncompromisingly committed performance on all occasions, respecting the audience even while challenging it; openness to the possibilities of the moment; openness towards audience members, often young musicians, who want to speak to him after a performance. This does not suggest a muffling of creativity or a retreat into "a zone of psychic shelter". In the current state of politics and in a subgenre of an already minor sector of the music world, is there more the music can do than send out into the world a model of creative thinking and energy, and so embody a spirit of potential transformation?

Bernie O'Seaghdhe Dublin, Ireland

Gender imbalance

As one of the most progressive hubs for music journalism around, I do find one thing in particular a little disconcerting. There seems to be a lack of in depth coverage of female artists in your magazine. The reviews and Bites sections see women popping up often enough, but once you hit the larger articles, they all but disappear. It appears as though we're lucky to see a female artist on the cover of *The Wire* once a year. Surely artists such as Kaffie Matthews, Pauline

Oliveros, Blonde Redhead, Bahamadia, Peggy Lee (Vancouver cellist), Mira Calix, Low, Alice Coltrane, Susie Ibarra, Cat Power and Mecca Normal deserve more than a glance. Oh, and keep the Peaches coming. **Sherry Ostapovitch** via email

Model magazine

Love *The Wire*. Love the new design. Love everything about you people. Have been reading on and off since 1984, when the likes of David Sanborn would pop up in yer pages now and then. Thankful I could, even then, str through the chaff and get to the good stuff. I still have an issue from 1985 with Coltrane on the cover. Among other things, thank you for introducing a punk to improvised music many, many years ago. It helped me to understand jazz and just about everything else that makes life worth living. I was the publisher of a visual arts magazine called *New Art Examiner* (in Chicago) a few years back, and I constantly used *The Wire* as a model for what a magazine could be. It keeps getting better and better. I even love your business model, if you have one. Anyway, fuck models. Whatever you're doing clearly works.

Graunt Samuelson Pittsburgh, USA

Happiness is a warm Fug

I love your mag and as soon as I have paid off a terrible online telephone bill, it is on my list to subscribe... Here in Dubble You country *The Wire* is a life raft to civilization (not to sound elitist... eh, why not!). But you must do a Fugs article! If you have recently and I missed it, stike that and well done. But if not, please consider. Anyway, thanks for many enlightening issues (although you must get over the Fushitsusha thing).

Mike Kittell Kernville, USA

Passing Fad

I remember Chris Bohn once describing Fad Gadget's "Ricky's Hand" as "an electro sicko classic". I agree... wholeheartedly. I see Fad Gadget's name re-emerging on line-ups. Please do a feature. Thank you. **Tap Water** via email

Corrections

Issue 211 In the Pandit Pran Nath article, the photo of his concert at the Cathedral of St John the Divine should have been dated 1991.

Issue 210 In the Acid Mothers Temple article, the photo of Makoto Kawabata bowing his guitar in July 2001 at Bembo Tower in Paris should have been credited to Florent Delval/www.chyosaba.com.

Issue 209 In On Location, the Mutek photos should have been credited to Philip Sherburne. □

Coming next month

Staubgold CD

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Rhythmic revolutionaries. By Chris Menist



"The spiritual nature of African music is in everything," says James 'Plunky' Branch, saxophonist founder of underrated Afro-jazz/funk group Oneness Of JuJu. "When I play on Sunday at my church, I play with the same exact breath, fingers and scales that I use on Saturday night."

I'm sitting with Plunky in his living room in Richmond, Virginia. His son's dog, wearing a pink spiky collar, occasionally interrupts our conversation, but otherwise it's a peaceful, relaxing afternoon as he reaches back across three decades to recall JuJu's glory days. Whilst principally known for the heavy Afro-funk workout "African Rhythms", the group touched base with many of the key figures in American black music and politics. The finest moments from that career have at last been documented on *African Rhythms: Oneness Of JuJu 1970-1982* (Strut), a double CD that compiles their earlier cosmic jazz visions with a selection of their later funk and R&B phase.

Born in 1947, Plunky grew up in the racially segregated town of Richmond. The prevailing injustice affected Plunky profoundly. "If you looked a white person in the face you might be in trouble," he recalls. "And if you looked a white woman in the face, you might be lynched." Life in Richmond affected my outlook, and affected my politics, and ultimately affected my music."

At 21, Plunky dropped out of New York's Columbia University to pursue music. Although he answered his draft call for Vietnam, he deserted after learning how to handle a firearm. On the run from the FBI, and with his head full of revolutionary sentiments, he headed west to San Francisco, where he soon found himself in a milieu that included black activists George Jackson and Angela Davis. Decisively, he also met South African exile Ndikho Xaba, a versatile jazz musician who boasted amongst his talents piano, percussion, trumpet and 'seaweed horn'.

"Ndiko taught us to play African music and improvise and use music as a political and cultural force," explains Plunky. After working with Ndiko And The Netives, he was inspired to form his own group, JuJu, with percussionist Babetunde Michael Lea, vibesman on Mosha, and old college friend Ken Shebana on

bass. Another associate was percussionist Bill Summers, who taught Plunky the rudiments of Afro-Cuban percussion before joining Herbie Hancock's Headhunters.

"The name JuJu was not chosen out of happenstance," Plunky says now. "There are four or five definitions of the word 'juju', but one of them is the idea of being able to affect another person's subconscious with something that you do."

In New York, Charles Tolliver's and Stanley Cowell's Strata East label was giving as much financial and artistic control to artists as possible; an obvious home for Plunky and co's first album, *Message From Mozambique*. [Label's like] Strata East, Tribe, Black Fire and Strata (from Detroit) represented the first time in history where black musicians made this kind of revolutionary stand and controlled their own musical destinies," states Plunky. "We then moved back east, and based ourselves in New York. There was a loft jazz scene, Anthony Braxton, Julius Hemphill. Chapter 2: Nis [Mozambique's follow-up] took us more in the direction of black nationalism." Unfortunately, when he turned up to meet the label for the first time, he was arrested by the FBI, and ended up serving 30 days in jail for desertion.

Eventually, JuJu fell into a loft jazz scene which revolved around venues such as the Spirit House (run by the poet Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones), and The East in Brooklyn, which housed spoken word, music, and radical theatre. Some of these performances drew them to the attention of Omotie Coleman, Plunky recalls. "One day [Omotie] said, 'You guys are doing great things. Where are you staying? If you want, you can stay at my place.' A couple of days later he said, 'Listen, I have this gallery downstairs, a loft upstairs - here's the keys. I'm going abroad for six weeks.'"

The commune lived at Coleman's apartment, using the saxophonist's reel to reel recorder to preserve their rehearsals. Coleman occasionally joined their impromptu jamming sessions. Sun Ra was another figure they touched base with, and he even used some members of the group for his epic *Space Is The Place*.

By 1974, the pressure of New York life had become too much and the group decamped to Richmond, by

now more relaxed racially than during Plunky's childhood, but still only slowly breaking the links with its past. Renting a cheap space still meant being in the ghetto, and they set up the JuJu Raga Artist House, loosely based on their experience in Omotie Coleman's gallery.

A couple of original members quit, and Plunky's brother Muz joined on bass. They also acquired a female singer, Lady Eke-Eke. This called for a change of name: Oneness Of JuJu. Richmond didn't provide a huge market for avant garde jazz, so more R&B elements were incorporated in order to keep working.

"If we put a backbeat to Afro-Cuban rhythms, people in Richmond could be drawn to it and it didn't really change anything about our message," reasons Plunky.

At this stage they came into contact with Jimmy Gray, a radio DJ and distribution rap for CMT and Strata East. Because of dissatisfaction with the latter, in 1975 Gray and Plunky decided to set up their own label, Black Fire. The label's debut was *African Rhythms*, which Gray assisted in producing. The title track, with its horn arrangements, undulating drum grooves and waves of African percussion, reflects all the musical elements they had absorbed over the previous years. For this new period of their career it was as much a statement of intent as well as a recap of their past incarnations. "Funky Wood", a balafon-led West African number, was also used in the credits for a local radio station's news programme.

Despite *African Rhythms* - and its successor, *Space Jungle Liv* - being received well on both sides of the Atlantic, financial limitations meant no further Oneness product appeared until 1982, with their commercial apex, the more discoidal "Every Way But Loose". Plunky has recently converted a touring version of Oneness Of JuJu, with which he hopes to recapture the driving ecstasy of "African Rhythms". "We were trying to make a song that people could dance to," he concludes, "but the extended message would have been: even when you're dancing to Chuck Berry or Motown, these are African rhythms that make you dance and clap your hands." □ *African Rhythms: Oneness Of JuJu 1970-1982* is out now on Strut. The group play a short UK tour this month, see *Out There*

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Ekkehard Ehlers

Glitches and devils. By Philip Sherburne

"When I was 16 I heard Ayler's music for the first time," says Ekkehard Ehlers, the Frankfurt-based electronics perpetrator of the mini-UP Ekkehard Ehlers Plays Albert Ayler (Staubgold). "To me it was as if I heard music for the first time." Though in the past Ehlers has sampled his near-soundlike namesake as part of *Autopoieses*, you'd need a finely tuned ear to detect any live music in the two digitally manipulated cello compositions making up *Plays Albert Ayler*. For all the deep impression the late saxophonist made on Ehlers as a teenager, its emotional impact has been refined into the second of a series of concept-driven "tributes" to various 20th-century artists. Preceded by the *Plays Robert Johnson* 77 ("Bottin'-Boy") and soon to be followed by the *Plays Casavettes mini-UP* (also on Staubgold), *Plays Albert Ayler* is not a reordering of Albert Ayler samples, as the title might suggest, but a piece Ehlers wrote for solo cello, recorded and then digitally manipulated, freezing and fragmenting the instrument in mid-flow. Free jazz meets glitch, sure, but as a meticulously composed work, it's worlds away from the electronic improv of, say, *Polechneel* or the label Grob. "The *Plays* series deals with 'reference,'" explains Ehlers. "Everyone is sampling; sampling is the figure of historic devices in digital music. My idea is not [just] to sample, but also to refer to historic places and figures." Ehlers has assembled an intriguing constellation of figures: next in line after actor/film maker John Cassavetes are German author Hubert Fichte and finally the English composer Cornelius Cardew. Only the Cardew piece will contain actual samples – well, you can't sample a writer, as Ehlers points out. "Reference" is a basic structure in digital music," he continues, citing American software manipulators Terre Thaemlitz and Akira Rabeaux, as well as his recent collaborator Stephan Mathieu, with whom he has recorded a CD called *Heroin* for Stampflap's Bromlon series. "I'm trying to deal with that more abstractly." That abstraction is as much microscopic as microscopic: the back cover of each record features a photograph of the region the artist of the title came from, filmed by a NASA satellite.

An artist and educator based in Frankfurt, Ehlers recorded his first works for Mille Plateaux and its

offshoot Ritornell in 1998, as part of the aforementioned *Autopoieses* duo with Sebastian Meissner. Since then he has used the aliases Aach and Betneb (for Force Inc and Klang Elektronik respectively), and teamed up with Karaoke Kalk's Albrecht Kunze in the group März. But the current *Plays...* series, released under his own name, elaborates on his interpretation of a critique by Frankfurt school philosopher Theodor Adorno, which he had paraphrased in his sleeve note to an earlier album, *Betneb* (2000, Mille Plateaux). "Thinking is still a problem in electronic music," the note proclaimed. "It means that [a preoccupation with] cables, plugs, etcetera, is too much involved in the musical structure," Ehlers elaborates today. "You have to work too long on the sounds, surface and organization, so that in the end there's no idea of content any more. That is also my problem with electronic music."

Accordingly, Ehlers avoids the traditional approaches of hardware, MIDI and software sound design, often concentrating entirely on the manipulation of fragments taken from existing music history. Dealing with "movements between closed systems," *Betneb* breaks down works from such early 20th-century composers as Arnold Schoenberg and Charles Ives into blocks which are stacked obsessively and then knocked over again in the construction of "a complex, systemic acoustic space corresponding to 'L'expérience intérieure,'" as Ehlers put it in his sleeve notes. "Every track is created out of one source and the loops are layered in a dodecaphone-like structure," he responds now, when asked to expand upon the idea of "closed systems." It may be the first application of 12-tone composition to sampling, but the structure is never evident. Instead, *Betneb* – which translates as "business" or "activity" – sounds like an uneasy morass of grunled strings and fuzzy tonalities, by turns Romantic and utterly alienating. Ehlers's own comments evoke these contradictions, interrupting a discourse on recombinant logic to proclaim unabashedly, "I'm always trying to produce the saddest music in the world. I used Schoenberg and Ives because they were the last composers to deal with a special kind of Romanticism, like in *Verklärte*

Nacht and Ives's *Fourth Symphony* – oh, it's too beautiful, I'm dying every time!"

Ehlers's work in *Autopoieses*, and with Stephan Mathieu on *Heroin*, similarly concentrated on the framing and juxtaposition of extracts from pop and "serious" music alike. For a self-taught musician – "My musical training was record collecting," he says, though he admits he had gained passing familiarity with some instruments in school – the Frankfurt philosophy student has strayed surprisingly far from the digital DIY of so much software-based composition. Despite his admission that "I can read some scores, but it's difficult for me," Ehlers has begun exploring the use of graphic scores (in a nod to Cardew) utilizing non-traditional notation. Indeed, he's currently composing *Misander*, a piece for an exhibition called *Frequencies*, to be held next year at Frankfurt's Kunsthalle Schirn.

As if these activities weren't enough, he also teaches music and digital art at the school of fine arts in Saarbrücken with Stephan Mathieu, and at the Merz Academy in Stuttgart. Finally, Ehlers works as a video artist and runs the Whatness label with Markus Wersbeck, tracing "the borderline between contemporary art and music." A current work in progress, *The Kiss*, reflects his interest in closed systems: three couples sit at a series of tables, filmed head-on by five cameras, and walk through an intricately choreographed "musical chess" game of changes and actions, such as chewing gum, reading Jane Austen and, of course, kissing. Based on "the complexity of human behaviour," it reflects the veiled humanism at the core of all Ehlers's work. The other two grounding his *Plays...* series, he says obliquely, "is emotional complexity. The five [artists cited in the series] were all involved in special kinds of 'resistance,' and they did it in a very complex, emotional way. I've been working on this series for one and a half years now, and I've thought so much about it, it's difficult for me to express my thoughts. Maybe just listen?" □ Ekkehard Ehlers *Plays Albert Ayler* and *Plays John Cassavetes* are out now on Staubgold. Ehlers and Stephan Mathieu's *Heroin* is on Stampflap. Websites: www.autopoieses.de and www.whatness.de

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William Winant

Drumming up support. By Richard Henderson



When Lou Reed said, "My week beats your year", he said just as easily have been describing the diary of William Winant, the percussionist set to nail Most Valuable Player status in the American New Music scene. Pausing to speak at his home in Oakland, California, he had just returned from a unique, architecturally inspired concert in Los Angeles. This, in turn, immediately followed his recent tour accompanying Sonic Youth on their ten-concert Goodbye 20th Century tour of Europe.

The LA recital was one of a series of New Music events staged at the Schindler House, the preserved West Hollywood studio residence of visionary architect Rudolf Schindler. The common thread was music which interacts with the unique acoustic properties of the poured concrete structure. Winant's sold out show, which drew an audience of artists, dancers and others spanning Southern California's artistic community, was a solo recital of James Tenney's percussion pieces – some electronically assisted, others purely acoustic – assisted by the composer.

That set, as it turns out, was a logical progression from Winant's novel excursion with avant rockers Sonic Youth. Winant co-produced 2000's commemorative set *Goodbye 20th Century* (SYR), in which the group covered compositions by Christian Wolff, John Cage, James Tenney, Pauline Oliveros, Steve Reich and Fluxus composers George Maciunas and Yoko Ono. The drummer then joined the group this last spring for the aforementioned continental excursion devoted to the *Goodbye 20th Century* project.

"One of the pieces that I did down in LA was one of the pieces that I did every night with Sonic Youth," Winant remarks, "an arrangement of a solo Jim Tenney piece, *Having Never Written A Note For Percussion*. I usually do it as a solo gong piece, but when we did the record I arranged it as a group piece for Sonic Youth, Jim O'Rourke and myself. It became the opener for every concert on the tour. By the time I got to LA, I had that one under my belt, as we had

already performed it several times."

In addition to Sonic Youth, Winant and Jim O'Rourke, guest musicians at each tour stop were invited to sit in on Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise*. Winant recalls, "In Ghent, Belgium we picked up Fredric Rzewski, a friend of Cardew's who had participated in the premiere of *Treatise*, thus adding a historic aspect to the piece. Musicians from The Ex sat in with us in Holland." Winant, O'Rourke, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo and Steve Shelley participated in a recording session during the Holland stop, organised by Terne and Luke Ex, bassist and guitarist of The Ex respectively, with percussionist Han Bennink and Dutch musicians Walter Wierbos on trombone and bass clarinet Ab Baars. The results are slated to appear on The Ex's label FishTank.


The tour lasted a fortnight, with concerts in Barcelona, Zurich and Paris, three shows in Amsterdam, Bologna, Rome, and in London at the Royal Festival Hall, where guests included vocalist Laetitia Sadler from Stereolab and Susan Stenger, from Band Of Susans, on electric flute). As part of Sonic Youth and co's tour, two shows were strictly rock affairs, on which Winant also played. "We incorporated some of the rock songs into the 20th Century show, songs that were influenced by those composers or used sounds or techniques involved in those pieces, showing how [contemporary music] techniques transfer over into Sonic Youth's songs, especially those on their last album, *NYC Ghosts And Flowers*."

Reviewing over six months of near continual performances, William Winant notes a celebrity encounter seemingly at cosmic odds with the academic bent of the Sonic Youth tour. "Kim Gordon was interviewed in London by Anita Palenberg for a zine that she's doing. We had dinner and hung out with her. She was truly interesting and intelligent." Though he hadn't seen Palenberg's appearance in *Roeg and Cammell's* 1969 film, *Performance*, since his high school days, Winant admits, "I went out and bought a copy."

Other recent projects have included the late summer release (on Web Of Mimicry) of the third, Winant-enhanced album by Secret Chiefs 3, the side project of Mr Bungle's guitar player Trey Spruance and violinist Eyvind Kang. On the not too distant horizon is what Winant describes as "A big project with Alvin Curran – I'll be recording with him, Fred Frith and Joan Jeanrenaud. It's a big dance piece, commissioned by the Margaret Jenkins Gance Company and written for cello, bass mamba, guitar and bass guitar."

Last one should forget, the Abel-Steinberg/Winant duo continues its forays into the darkest heart of modern composing. The duo will be part of a recital with Californian composer Terry Riley at Washington DC's Library of Congress in 2002, playing Riley's *Trio For Violin, Piano & Percussion*. Winant may perform Riley's guitar and percussion pieces in tandem with the composer's son Glyn. Upcoming trio performances involve specific works written for them by, variously, Taiwan's Sun-Ching Lam and Wadada Leo Smith.

But Winant is most excited about two new projects he's involved with on the Tzadik label. He has just finished mastering a new Christian Wolff album, which he co-produced along with Tzadik's proprietor John Zorn. The disc includes Burdocks, performed at San Francisco's Other Minds 6 festival in 2000, on which Winant played alongside guitarist Fred Frith, cellist Joan Jeanrenaud, Bob Ostertag, Gordon Mumma, Miya Masaoka and Wolff himself. Also due later this autumn is an album of Gordon Mumma compositions, which will feature all of the former Cage collaborator's electroacoustic music. Spanning the 60s through the 80s, the disc contains a four-handed piano piece with Robert Ashley as one of the pianists, abetted by Mumma's electronics. Musing on the scope of Mumma's accomplishment, Winant comments, "I think it's going to be a terrific record. All the pieces have been remastered. Some have been on other records, but all have been out of print for some time." □



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Satlah

Last Exodus to Brooklyn. By Julian Cowley

"I could go anywhere," proclaims Danny Zamir. "I'm trying not to limit myself to one musical direction, to say, 'this is what I do.' But on the other hand I'm trying to do whatever feels really natural and closest to the truth." Also saxophonist Zamir's quest for musical truth took him from his native Israel to New York in 1999. There, he attracted the attention of John Zorn, who invited him to record for Tzadik. Two albums have followed on the Radical Jewish Culture wing of the label (Satlah under Zamir's own name, and Exodus by his group Satlah), both of them supporting Zorn's view of Zamir as an exciting young player with a distinctive voice. Both recordings feature his trio Satlah, combining his agile and driving voice with the bass of Shani Ezra Blumenkranz and the drums of Kevin Zubeck. Zamir values the trio format because "it gives you a lot of freedom, yet it feels like one unit. A quartet is, like, four people playing together. The trio is very different; it's like one thing, not three different people."

Satlah recently brought their exhilarating blend of musics to Europe, playing in Poland, Italy and France, and recording a session for the BBC. Guiding Zamir's musical development through such shaping experiences is his sturdy spiritual faith. "I don't say 'I do this, I do that'—it's what G-d has given me, that's what I have." The peculiar alchemy of Satlah distills a passion for post-bop jazz and a profound commitment to Jewish cultural tradition. As individual musical personalities, Blumenkranz and Zubeck are important to Zamir's sense of his own identity, but he stresses that continuous development is vital to them all. "I'm 22. We're still learning and growing as people. The place that we were on the first record and the place that we

were on the second record are very different, and it has a lot to do with personal changes. Even things that don't have anything to do with music I can hear in there. You never go back to where you were before. You may think the same, but you're in a new place." Exodus, the second Satlah album, which was recorded in a live setting, has more of New York's edge and bustle in it. For Zamir the November 2000 performances were "a very strong experience. We'd matured and figured out more what we want to do."

Nothing is written in stone, however. He may prefer to keep all future paths open, but Zamir has a clear perception of his route to the musical present. After dabbling with piano and violin, and being told by his mother, also a musician, that a drum kit would not be welcome in their home, he opted for the saxophone around ten years ago. Lessons with Dror Ben Gur, now also a New York resident, proved crucial. A teacher Zamir liked and respected, Gur introduced him to Charlie Parker's music. "I always say that whatever I know about the saxophone I know from Bird," he confesses. When Zamir progressed to study in the jazz department of Tel Aviv's performing arts high school, he drew upon Parker and Monk for audition material. Eric Dolphy was his next major enthusiasm and before long he was immersed in John Coltrane, whose towering figure still casts a long shadow across his thinking. "I had an intense Coltrane time," he says. "I guess every jazz musician has. There's really nothing like Coltrane. You can hear it in a second. You can't say a bad thing about Coltrane." He also acknowledges the importance of Ornette Coleman, John Zorn's Masada and, more surprisingly, guitarist Pat Metheny. "You can

say you don't like it stylistically but there's something there. He's trying to really play, that's what I like about him." The jazz scene in Israel is, Zamir says, small but vibrant, characterized by stylistic diversity, open-mindedness and a very high level of musical creativity. Still, "the usual tendency is to go West", and a lot of other fine Israeli musicians have found their way to New York. Just as he did back home, he still occasionally plays Jewish weddings, supplying "background music for the chicken". He values the opportunity to deepen his contact with Judaism and the discipline of playing to order, which feeds into his music. "It builds you, it strengthens you," he says.

Exodus includes the trio's reading of "Hesher Hamemulah", a traditional piece derived from Yemen's Jewish community. "We recorded a demo before the first album," he recalls. "At 4:30 in the morning, when we'd finished, Shani said, 'Let's do something with just darbuka', the little drum he plays, 'and saxophone.' I was ready to go to sleep but I said OK. It just happened. This song which I used to play in Israel." It harks back to Israeli weddings where Zamir performed as a member of a Yemenite group. In his original compositions too, Middle Eastern elements savour his jazz ingredients. "I didn't think, 'Let's start a Middle Eastern band,'" he clarifies. "What happened is that I'd sit at the piano to write a tune and something Middle Eastern would come out. It started while I was in Israel but it really got strong when I came to New York. I gave a demo to Zorn and he said, 'I'm so happy you chose Jewish tradition—I moved me.' I didn't even choose it. It just happened. I think G-d every day for it." □ Exodus is out now on Tzadik

Bitstream

New York hip-hop crew **The Coup** immediately withdrew the artwork for their forthcoming album *Panty Music* on Big Apple label 75 Ark, following the World Trade Centre disaster. The image, created by Coup mainman Boots Riley, depicted the twin towers on fire in a tentatively accurate pre-9/11 style. Riley, who stated that the artwork was completed in May of the year and completed the following month, promised the album would be released with a new cover image, commenting, "The original intent of the cover was to use the World Trade Centre to symbolise world capitalism and was not supposed to be realistic in its depiction although there is an uncanny similarity." In July, during recording sessions for the album, Riley told the *Parkland Mercury* "I definitely think that people should have democratic control over the world's resources, and that would be called communism. What we have now is a few people who control the resources, and the rest breaking off crumbs to fight over." The album will now come out on 5 November. More info can

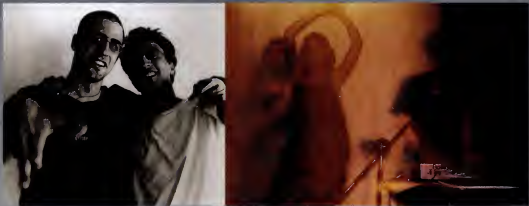
be found at www.75ark.com >>> Amid the terrible events of mid-September, we also heard equally shocking, but unconnected, news about Gary Todd, head of Los Angeles based **Cortical Foundation** label. He sustained serious injuries after falling headfirst from the third story window of a friend's apartment in Malibu, where he was running a room. He required 11 hours of intensive surgery to reconstruct part of his skull. The Cortical Foundation has recently done sterling work in releasing work by Hermann Hesse, Camille Carriere, Vito Riley and more, and we wish him well >>> **Derek Bailey** has quietly begun a series of CD-R releases as an aside from his usual label. The cottage industry discs will have minimal artwork and may be "low quality," but of definite historical interest. The first two in the series are *The Applauded Fik*, described as "Things you might like to know about Charlie Appleby" (dating on who he would be good for stanzas), and *Chrys*—"a collection of talking/speaking pieces by Derek Bailey from different times and of varied provenance". Costing £30/\$15, including postage, the discs are available from issue, 14 Downs Road, London E5 8QS, UK >>> **Lydia Lunch** teams up with Arabian Lights on Les Chansons Des Perverts, a collection of versions of "horny retro tunes" put out by those crazy cats at Germany's Dropped Dick Hot Wax label >>> **Movements** is a

new television series of 13 half hour films, featuring collaborations between Doc and video jockeys, to be shown on British television throughout October. These exclusive QJ mixes come from independent labels like Pork, Full Cycle, Pansytop, Rhythms, Hospital, Maya Tune, Balchit & Scalper, Law & Auler and Hydrogen Oukeba. VJs and visual crews include Orbital collaborator Giles Tordis, D-Fuse, Reality Check and the initiators of the project, **Addictive TV**. The latter pursue their Speed Out tour during October with an audiovisual posse including District, EBN's Brian Kore and Frustrated. Outies are: Brighton (29 September), Derby (6 October), Sheffield (7), Leeds (8), and Glasgow (4 November). Info: www.addictive.com >>> **ROIR** RP: Neil Cooper, the man who set up the longrunning **ROIR** label in New York, died on 13 August. Friends said Cooper "spent over 20 years working, sweating, breathing, blending **ROIR**". The label released such documents as Television's Blow Up tapes and Salsola's *Not Alive*, as well as live and studio recordings of many of the globe's most influential non-mainstream acts, from Einstürzende Neubauten to New York Dolls, Bad Brains and more. **ROIR** will remain active, with a new address: PO Box 501, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, USA, info@roir.com, www.roir.com.

THE TRAWLER

Global Ear: Beirut

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Joseph Ghosn hears the sound of DIY emanating from the rebuilt Lebanese capital



Middle Eastern promise: Houssam and Wissam Kassis of *Aks/Ser* (left) and Soap Kills

Viewed from the window of a plane, Beirut glows faintly, standing out as a gigantic and fragile urban web, attached to the Mediterranean shore and slowly spreading across the rest of Lebanon. The city is a fascinating landscape, full of contrasts and contradictions. On the same block stand newly erected shiny buildings and battered, wrecked houses, still displaying the scars of the war, bled to death by bombs and rockets. The clinically clean architecture that's slowly replacing the older, wrecked buildings make Beirut look like a ghost town, slowly fading away, with all of its roots and history erased. These days, there isn't a Lebanese soul willing to discuss the past or to reflect upon the war years. The shorter the memory, the better.

At night, Beirut goes a little crazy. In the Rue Monot neighbourhood near the centre of the city, a cluster of new, cosmopolitan bars and restaurants that wouldn't be out of place in Paris, New York or London become crowded with restless young people, high on hardcore techno and Euro dance beats. Except that this club music hybrid has been updated and blended with cheesy Arabic vocals to fit local tastes.

Confronted with the dictatorship of chart-friendly music – which is happily distributed by your usual friendly major companies, all of whom are well established in Lebanon, but seek only to produce commercial tunes or diaspora-flavoured Arab folk – experimental musicians find it difficult to work and develop a genuine music. Faced with a lack of rehearsal spaces, rejection from record companies and a very limited number of venues to perform in, certain aspiring musicians have instead embraced DIY computer music. It is very easy in Beirut to get hold of a cheap PC loaded with pirated software: a five dollar bill can get you a CD-R with the latest versions of Logic, Cubase or Reaktor programs. Music geeks and freaks have thus been making their own blend of Lebanese bedroom electronica, available on privately pressed CD-Rs, in tiny editions that pass within circles of friends and artists.

Typically, these tracks are raw, made of unpolished

blasts of noise, fat beats, chance harmonies, lucked-up pop structures and Ambient soundscapes. Ziad Saad's *I Pee Blue* is a three-song EP which sounds a bit like a crazed take on primitive blues filtered through distortion and fed to a glitch loving, tongue-in-cheek machine. Listening to it is like hearing some new kind of intermediate language, made out of the hisses and strains of the English and Arabic accents mixed together. This is, perhaps, a genuine Lebanese gesture, as Lebanon has always found pride in its intermingling of cultures.

Saad's rawness echoes in the music of local HipHop group Aks/Ser, who recently played a storming performance in Beirut's newly opened Virgin Megastore. These four young men, in their very early twenties, cut their way through a set made of rude beats, nifty guitar licks and sporadic Arabic samples. Their showcase ended in a furious explosion of pure noise, which made a few ears cruelly bleed. Merzbow would have blushed... Aks/Ser's Lebanese rapping reflects upon the current misery of the Lebanese people, and the group's own dissatisfaction as individuals. "I am a survivor of the war", "Nothing to do/Nothing can be done", sings mainman Walei Kadeh. "There are so many social problems that it is no problem to find issues to talk about in our songs," he says bitterly, when we meet a couple of days after the show. Aks/Ser's first EP, recently released, has been recorded and mixed in part with the help of local legends Soap Kills, a duo active for six or seven years, having started as a post-Grunge outfit and quickly relocating to more electronic territory. Their music revolves around singer Yasmine Hamdan's sexy scatting and sun drenched lazy moans, and Zeid's pastoral beats, chopped out of his Groovebox or PC.

Their version of cult Egyptian singer Asmah's "Ya Habibi Taala", recorded on their CD *Live At Circus*, is a fragile marriage of Arabic chants, abstract beats and stained hard bop. This particular record manages to be wild, short, wet and minimal. A very raw (and rare) artefact whose sleeve states: "This concert was

interrupted by an Israeli airstrike on Lebanon, inflicting civilian casualties and severe damage to the electrical infrastructure." One of Soap Kills' early videos was shot in an old abandoned train, used during the war as a military court (the accused were rapidly prosecuted in the first wagon, shot in the second and acid-burned in the third). After releasing their debut album, which comes across as a tussle between Stereolab and Porcheshead, Soap Kills are currently trying to settle in France. A true loss for the country, most say.

Still stuck in Beirut, and not too happy about it, is a young man named Charbel, whose various solo electronic projects are named Echo and La Chambre. A guitarist at heart, he also plays with The Scrambled Eggs, a space-rock outfit that, sadly, is forced to play trad rock in pubs and bars just to have the chance to play at all. Listening to his latest private recordings was most devastating. It reminded me of early Ambient Aphex Twin, crossed with a lo-fi take on Syd Barrett. Still in his early twenties, Charbel has barely been out of the country. His first trip was to Paris earlier this year. Now he longs to return to France. "Beirut depresses me and Paris depresses me also," he confides. "In Paris, however, I feel able to make a few things happen, which is impossible around here."

Even though most of these young, aspiring musicians find life pretty uncomfortable in Beirut, there are others arriving from outside Lebanon who have found things much to their liking. Seeking Tunisian oud player and ECM artist Anouar Brahmeh not far from the Syrian border, was a total joy, in the middle of Roman ruins, under the shadow of the Temple of Jupiter, his playing was mesmerising while, above his oud chords, his ghostly moanings slowly echoed through the night, above his oud chords. An hour into the concert (an out-percussion duet), upon hearing the muezzin's faraway chant, Brahmeh stopped playing to gently listen to the prayer that arrived as a distant answer to his pickings. A true epiphany that acted as a warm reminder: in Lebanon, there's still some magic hidden in these old stones that have survived so many wars. □

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Invisible Jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



Richie Hawtin

Tested by Liz Copeland

Born in 1970 in Oxfordshire, England, Richie Hawtin moved to Windsor in Canada with his parents at the age of nine. The record collection of his audiophile father, a robotics engineer at General Motors, provided him with much of his teenage listening: Tangerine Dream, Kraftwerk, early computer music and sci-fi soundtracks. Windsor is just across the river from Detroit, and the young Hawtin spent much of his teen days gaining access to the Motor City's fledgling Techno clubs. Aged 17, he started to DJ at such influential venues as the Shelter and Music Institute alongside Derrick May, Juan Atkins and Kevin Saunderson, where he became obsessed with their relentless machine rhythms.

In 1989, he formed the Plus 8 label with long term colleague John Acquaviva, and first gained attention with his *Artificial Intelligence*-friendly FUSE project. But his notoriety only really started spreading after he adopted the name of the comic book character Plastikman, and released the *Acidic Sheet One* album (Novamute 1993), complete with artwork that was often mistaken for LSD tabs. After 1994's *Musik*, Hawtin was propelled into a life of constant travelling to club engagements all around the world. In 1996 he initiated his *Concept* series of abstract electronic 12"s, ushering in a phase of even more brutally stripped down and cavernous Techno, which continued on projects like Plastikman's *Consumed* (1998) and his new *M_nus* label.

His latest record, just released on *M_nus/Novamute*, is *DES: Closer To The Edit*, a collection of 300 loops from Basic Channel, Baby Ford and Thomas Brinkmann, among others, reduced through several layers of deconstruction. It is also the most adventurous, melodic, soulful territory on which Hawtin has yet ventured. The Jukebox took place in Hawtin's office/studio in Windsor.

STUDIO 1 (AKA MIKE INK)

"GRÜN"

FROM VARIOUS STUDIO 1 PROGRAM 1986

I'm waiting for a change... Dh, there you go! It sounds like Mike Ink or something from the Köln posse. That very minimalist Köln approach with a very clean digital sound, but still with the warmth of analogue. I don't know exactly how they're recording their stuff, but a lot of the Germans, like Pole, have this hi-tech digital sound but are still capable of infusing it with some type of funkiness, some type of analogue warmth and soul, which a lot of people miss when they get into the digital side of things.

It is Mike Ink: a track called "Grün", released anonymously as part of his Studio 1 series. Some people compare you and Mike Ink.

Mike Ink and I have a strange history. We both started out in the early 80s. We had similarities back then because we were both really, really into Acid House. We both were experimenting with the 303 sound and trying to take Acid House one step further. He seemed to get tired of it at the same time that I was getting tired of it. We both suddenly, around 1996, came back on the scene and tried to redefine ourselves. He had been working with his Proton releases, and then came up with the longform Studio 1 project with just vocals and very little information. At the same time, I came up with the Concept series. We hadn't really had any dialogue about it between each other, it just kind of happened. When we see each other now, we talk and laugh about it. We've both always been trying to find a balance in our music. And we've always tried to have a progression in our music. Perhaps we both have short attention spans or something!

I find the music really interesting that he releases through his Kompakt label, whether it's playable as a DJ or not. He's a well-rounded artist. Mike does things like [Studio 1] and then does things like [the more Ambient] Gas... he goes all over the place. Those are the kind of artists I like. That's the kind of artist, hopefully, that I am, that people perceive me as. I'm interested in all areas of electronics, and I guess he is too.

TONY CONRAD FOUR VIOLINS (EXTRACT)

FROM EARLY MINIMALISM VOLUME ONE (TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS)
1984, RECORDED 1987

It sounds really familiar.

It's Tony Conrad, originally from 1964. This represents a different, more reflective kind of minimalism, whereas you've often focused on a "mess with your head", "get up and dance" approach.

Yes, at certain points. Not always. I don't know what *Consumed* would be considered... I guess all my music is "mess with your head". It's all coming from that perspective of a DJ trying to create some type of experience. But isn't all music trying to do that in the end? It sounds like bebop.

It's violin. He did this for two hours and then stopped recording once he noticed he was falling out of tune. It reminds me a little bit of some of the music from the Philip Glass movie soundtracks, with the slow droning development... It's a music that really is about slight vanances and fluctuations of frequencies, in beats or delays and structure. That's what I've always liked about minimal music. I don't think of it as minimal, but well balanced – something which takes a number of listens to totally get into. Or perhaps you can get into it on the first time, but with each additional listen, you notice another component of the sound. Slight things that were in the background that perhaps you didn't hear the first time. I think that's part of the attraction of that type of music to me. Having that space there

that's not too cluttered and suddenly realizing it's something that you hadn't heard before. It just depends on how you listen to it and what circumstances you listen to it in. It's just a really fine line of what's necessary and what's unnecessary.

HERBIE HANCOCK SEXTET "RAIN DANCE"

FROM DANCE (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) 1992

This is cool... It's like going to see Miles Davis in a jazz club in Logan's Run! There are definite space age aspects to it. You hear the jazz. You hear the funk. And you hear the space – in both ways.

It's Herbie Hancock. It's from 1972's *Sextant*. With its use of complex time signatures, drum machines and electronics, it was one of those records that horrified jazz purists at the time.

It seems that there was a group of early electric jazz pioneers that didn't really care that they sometimes alienated their own crowd by pushing their audience to try to bridge entirely new ways of recording and playing. Part of that challenge is what interests me in music. Sometimes you do things because they just haven't been done, or perhaps they haven't been done in a way that you think is correct. With this type of track, there is also an idea of bringing a number of musicians together and using anything that's available at that time to re-evaluate how those musicians interact together and how they play together. It's similar to what I'm doing with the new record. *DES* is based on sampling, putting records and loops together. The Art Of Noise did it; the early HipHop guys did it scratching records. I've updated that with the technology that's now at hand and taken a slightly different perspective on it.

That's why I've always been evolved and interested in electronic music, because there always seems to be these possibilities popping up. Perhaps it was only in my own head that traditional music was never that exciting, because it seems too set in its ways. Perhaps it wasn't like that in the 50s, 60s and 70s. When I became interested in music in the 80s, things had really become pigeonholed and solidified. Electronic music didn't seem to have so many parameters and reference points.

It's closely tied to technology, which is continually advancing.

Exactly. This isn't what some of the jazz purists wanted to hear. They were just looking for a continuation of jazz as they knew it. From what I know, jazz has always been a music that evolves... Improvisation is also about creating something new, and on the fly. And that's exactly what electronic music and Techno are about.

FRONT 242 "BODY TO BODY"

FROM NO COMMENT (EPIC) 1984

Front 242? [Laughs] I caught that one in two seconds! Before I even heard the vocal, I was going to say Art Of Noise, because of the drum sounds. The very early, digital 707-type drum sounds. Front 242 were a big influence on me, for sure. Sometimes when people ask about influences there are so many that you sometimes forget a few, but until someone plays it in front of you. Around that time, I had all the Nitzer Ebb and Front 242 records. In the early 80s, when I was getting into electronic music, what was going on around here was that cross between alternative, electronic and Nu Beat. It's what bridged me into the sparseness of Detroit Techno. Front 242, Nitzer Ebb, Severed Heads, even Skinny Puppy. There's not much going on here, it's quite stripped down. Bassline, drums, vocal – and that's it. Very menacing, very youthful. Front 242 had some really experimental pieces on their early

Invisible Jukebox

albums and on the B-sides of their 12"s. They became quite popular later on, but there's a lot of early sampling technology, too, in these old tracks. Looping weird vocals and movie snippets and things like that.

MORTON FELDMAN "ROTHKO CHAPEL, SEGMENT 5"

FROM *ROTHKO CHAPEL/WHY PATTERNS?* (NEW ALBUM)
1971, RESORDG 1991

This sounds familiar, too. I probably don't know it though.

This is composer Morton Feldman: a piece composed for the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. You have often talked about American abstract expressionism being a deep influence on your own music...

Only hearing a small snippet of this, it seems to make sense. Whenever I'm in Houston I go to the Chapel for a bit. It's the best place I've been on the planet for a genuine Rothko experience. The Tate Gallery with the original Rothko room in London was a great Rothko experience, but nothing comes close to the Chapel. Of course, for Consumed and a lot of my work ever since, becoming more introduced to the art scene, getting involved with the millennium celebration last year, it's another challenge for creating something new. Finding inspiration in different places.

I've always had an interest in the visual element. I originally come from a film perspective... I thought about going to school for cinematography. When I used to listen to music in the 80s, as I got more and more into instrumental music, not only for the technology and computer aspects of the music, it was also the idea of getting away from the vocals that seemed to make more sense to the way I used to listen and think about music. Even when I used to listen to early New Order instrumental pieces, I always saw pictures in my head, thinking about how the graphics, and how the art sounds, is something that goes through my head a lot. When sitting in the Rothko Chapel or seeing a sculpture by [Anish] Kapoor, the opposite reaction runs through my head: how does this interact with the sound? How can I create something new? How would this 'look'? This also comes from seeing and listening to things structurally. Maybe that comes down to the music that I'm involved in being minimal or balanced music. You start to see all the different components – now I'm saying 'see' and not 'hear' – as very individualistic things that inhabit the space you're creating.

Do you see any parallels between this and what you did at the La Beauté millennium event in a medieval cathedral in Avignon last year?

The project in France was interesting because the basic theme was beauty, and how that definition of beauty has changed over time. A big thing for me was the idea that technology – including accidental technology – can be beautiful to us. You're in this structure that was very purposefully built, very handmade, which existed for hundreds of years. A kind of haphazard way of creating music started to come into my head. One of the pieces I put there was just the end of one of my records. I recorded something very on-purpose, put it on a record, and instead of just playing it back, I ended up playing back just a loop of the scratches at the end of the record. It became kind of the end, the continuum at the end of my recording. To some people, it would have been the ugliest, most unlistenable part of the record, but in some ways it had become the most beautiful part to me. It seemed to work in that context.

Did you find that having to use technology worked against the structure of the piece?

There was quite a lot of technology in the show. Bill

Vida was there, who is totally based in pieces. There were the sound system pieces... It was important to me for technology to be as unobtrusive as possible. I really didn't want it to be about the technology – I wanted it to be about the sounds that technology has created. To fill these rooms, those voids of sound – that would never have been possible or dreamed of when that place was created.

AUTECHE "PARHELIC TRIANGLE"

FROM *CONFIELD* (WARP) 2001

[Listens for a bit] I have no idea who this is.

It's present day.

Yes, I can tell that it's modern. Apex Twin?

Close.

Squarepusher?

Auteche. It's from their newest album, Confield. It nearly arrives at a melody, but stops just short.

I find it really easy to follow. But I guess that while I consider a lot of my music to be musical, traditionally people would say it's very unmusical. To me, an interesting drum loop, or an interesting rhythmic pattern is just as musical as a collection of notes. I think that's what a lot of people are finally understanding and becoming aware of. Technology allows us to make a repetition of ideas that grow on you, but which isn't a typical selection of C sharp, D sharp, etcetera... I've met Rob [Brown] and Sean [Booth]. They're really nice guys. I definitely respect them for sticking to their guns and trying to move on with every album. They seem to put the finger up to everyone and continue with what they're doing, but without going up their own ass and being experimental just for the sake of being experimental. I was never really into that. I always like people who were willing to push their audience without completely losing them. That's a challenge in music and in any art, taking people somewhere new while still speaking their language. Sure, it's impressive to walk into something completely off the wall, but people are just going to leave and say, 'Well, that was crazy. I was shocked, but what they hell were they saying? What was the point?' Try to bring the people along with you while expanding them at the same time.

BABY FORD "OOCHY COOCHY (KONRAD KADET MIX)"

FROM *FORTRAX RHYTHM KING* 1988

Baby Ford 'Oochy Coochy'. It was a really influential record around Detroit back in the late 80s. The late 80s? Yeah, fuck! I was first introduced to his music, without realising who it was, through listening to Derrick [May] on the radio, and probably Jeff [Mills, aka The Wizard]. It was a big influence on me. A great reaction to what Detroit was sending out. There was an initial wave from the first records that came from Detroit. Derrick, Kevin [Swenderson], Juan [Akins], Eddie [Fowlkes] and all those guys – they sent out these waves, sounds and transmissions that inspired people. But I don't know if what we were doing back then at Plus B was inspired just by those direct soundwaves from Derrick and Kevin. Although we were inspired by what they created, we were just as inspired by what came out from other people being inspired. We were hearing the vibrations and also the reverberations coming back from Europe, and this album was a big reverberation.

This sounds closer to what you've done than any of what's come out of Detroit.

This was a big track at the Shelter. There were people who tried to take Detroit ideas and just imitate it. There were other people who took it, were inspired by it and put their own twist on it. This has a British

flavour but you can hear where it originally came from... Peter Ford [laughs]. There are very few artists who I can say that I was listening to ten or 12 years ago who inspired me as much then as they do now, and in completely different ways. Peter has completely progressed. He went from ForTrax to going down the road of pop with his World Of Batty Ford album; then went completely back under the radar with [his underground Techno labels] Itach and Triik, and his Minimal Man project [with Ian Loveday aka Eon]. Now [he's appeared] on Klang and Pervision. I expect him to be one of the guys that in 20 years, whether or not I'm still doing this or not, I'll be listening to his records, from present day to back then. He always seems to be one step ahead, always trying to progress and find out where he needs to go next.

GIL MELÉ "DESERT TRIP"

FROM *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN* (OST) (XIPP) 1971

[Listens for a while]

It's a soundtrack.

To what?

The Andromeda Strain, the 1971 science fiction movie, with music by former jazz musician Gil Melé. Are you familiar with it?

Yes, but I don't remember this sequence. Is it one of those soundtracks that don't actually appear in the movie? [Observing the octagonal record and accompanying sleeve] This packaging is amazing. This has that late 60s, early 70s sound, for sure. Not just from the instrumentation but from the recording technique too. Being into film early on, I was always into science fiction films. When I got into electronic music, I definitely started to watch some of my favourite movies again and take even more note of the sound. *WaveLength*, *The Andromeda Strain*, *Logan's Run* and *THX 1138* were key films for me. But *Forbidden Planet*, I believe, was one of the first analogue electronic movie scores. So it was a very important soundtrack. That angle has always come up through my music because, although I got into it via the dancefloor and clubs, there was always that cinematic kind of love, both visually and sonically. It's taken me through these different turns in my career, things like *Consumed* and *Minus Orange*.

I'm surprised that you haven't yet made a soundtrack.

I've been in a couple of discussions over the years. It's something I definitely want to do, and it will happen at the right time. In recent years, there seems to be some development towards bringing an electronic soundtrack to a film with a style that would work. I thought [Darren Aronofsky's 1998 film] *π* really worked. It was a step in the right direction. Because a lot of film work is being digitised now, and the music is digitised, you're starting to work in the same realm, with similar programs, instruments and technologies. Now that those things have come together you can really come up with a sound and have it inspire a visual or an effect in the movie. And also take a computerised effect visually, send that through to something and get a sound equivalent. If you close your eyes and just hear part of the movie, you might actually see what you would see if you opened your eyes. It's the only movie I've seen that has been like getting close to that point. Now the perfect kind of soundtrack really is going to be electronic. People are starting to revisit the idea. What I've always been interested in, coming from both sides, is seeing what you're hearing and hearing what you're seeing and having those things come together and interact. They still seem to be two separate entities, but if we can bring them together closer, we'll have something much more powerful. ☐



Jerome Cooper

In Concert: From There to Hear

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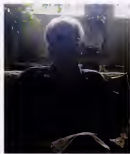
A SHADY PRESENCE LURKING IN THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES OF MINIMALISM, FIDDLER AND PHILOSOPHER HENRY FLYNT HAS SPENT FOUR DECADES ATTEMPTING TO RECRUISE THE HILLSBILLY SOUND OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH BY WHITTLING IT INTO AN OPEN, FREEFORM, ECSTATIC TRANCE MUSIC. NOW, HIS KEY WORKS ARE RESURFACING AFTER 17 YEARS OF SELF-IMPOSED SILENCE. WORDS: NARCUS SOON

AMERICAN

The devil's with Henry Flynt in New York, 1979 (below) and today in his SoHo apartment



IT



"Is it OK to talk about what we think about this civilisation?" asks 61-year-old hillbilly minimalist fiddler and philosopher Henry Flynt, in his broad Southern accent, as we drink coffee in a restaurant in New York's SoHo district, where he lives. "It's the aftermath of a wreck. It's just in a condition of destruction. I'm trying to think of a more polite word than putrefaction. Everything that is organic is dead and decomposing, and everything that is not organic is twisted and fused."

For 40 years, to almost complete indifference, Flynt has waged his own multi-front struggle against this culture, a struggle which has encompassed everything from music, dance and painting, to "concept art", a term which he coined in a 1961 essay, a broad range of philosophical treatises on everything from mathematics through psychedelics to utopian politics, and even a visionary 1975 commune called the Gens Liberation Project.

After decades of gathering dust, some of Flynt's key musical works are finally emerging. A two CD set, *You Are My Everlovin'/Celestial Power: New American Ethnic Music Volume 1*, issued earlier this year by Baltimore musician and impresario John Beindt on his Recorded label, collects two of the extraordinary drone and violin "HESSE" (Hyllanogenic Ecstatic Sound Environment) pieces he developed with Swedish composer, musician and mathematician Catherine Christer Hennin in the late 1970s after studying with raga master Pandit Pran Nath (see *The Wire* 211). Then there's the recent *Ampersand* release, *Graduation And Other New Country And Blues Music*, a set of avant Country recordings from the late 1970s, in which he places Country on an infinite plateau that constantly surprises, while remaining as American as a cross-country road trip. *Availing* release are unique overdrubbed violin pieces from the 1960s, like "Hoodwound", and recordings of his blazing cosmic rockabilly and freeform psychedelic guitar and drum collaborations with Hennin under the name *Charm Warrors*, made in the years before Flynt quit making music in 1984.

Asked whether he's a recluse, Flynt responds, "Not at all. In fact, how strange. I've been screaming for attention for 40 years. I have a long list of attempts to become a public figure. It just keeps failing over and over!"

A self-described nerd, Flynt grew up studying classical violin in North Carolina in the 1950s, surrounded by, yet oblivious to, the Southern "ethnic" cultures of bluegrass, Country and the blues. He studied mathematics at Harvard, with a view to pursuing philosophy, while continuing his studies of New Music. A meeting with La Monte Young in New

York in 1960 provided the blueprint for Flynt's future musical direction. Young was at that time simultaneously pursuing his work in modern composition while playing ferocious saxophone and gospel based piano pieces. Inspired by both Young and exposure to Indian classical music, Coltrane and Country blues, as well as his growing commitment to leftist politics (Flynt was a member of a Marxist group in the mid-60s, and has continued to pursue radical, utopian politics in his philosophical works), he began producing solo fiddle pieces that embody his revolt against the classical modernism of Cage and Stockhausen (against whom he demonstrated in 1964 with fellow Harvard student Tony Conrad), and his allegiance to what he calls "new American ethnic music". This was the music of the South of his childhood, whose traditions he reshaped according to his own vision of an ecstatic, trance-inducing sound, appropriating techniques from contemporary composition to add to the armoury of ethnic music.

Flynt is at pains to differentiate his work from the superficial borrowings from ethnicity that are pervasive in modern music. "You can't just say well now I'm going to go to the distmore, get some hillbilly software and throw some hillbilly into my minimalist modern music," he declares. "For me that's not what it's about. Since it's a different musical language, you have to acquire some chops. Just saying you're a composer and a musician and producing a violin and a piece of paper doesn't count for anything in that world of banjo pickers and fiddlers. What the pedal steel player is doing on my CD is sophisticated stuff!"

Setting aside his own formidable fiddling skills, Flynt acknowledges that finding other musicians with the requisite chops who were willing to follow his instructions was never easy. For the 1975 *Graduation* sessions, Flynt recalls that he had to trick the musicians into doing what he wanted. "It was always a luke," he remembers. "You'd bring them into this situation almost blind, throw them into these open forms and ask them to start flying. What usually happened was that they managed to do it once. Afterwards, they shrugged their shoulders and walked away. One of them said that he had a great job lined up playing in a ski resort near Denver."

Flynt is aware of the paradox his music embodies: trying to play ethnic music for a community that is for the most part uninterested in his attempts to elevate or enrich it. He in turn says, "I have no interest in entering their world and becoming a commercial musician performing three minute songs. I've taken their music and flipped it apart as the seems to expand it, make it work in a different way."

Flynt has also occasionally brushed with the rock

world. In the mid-60s, he took guitar lessons from Lou Reed and sat in on a solo for John Cale with The Velvet Underground for four nights in 1966, during the Exploding Plastic Inevitable period. "I enjoyed the experience, but I was kind of out of place," he admits. "We would get into long chaotic pieces, but Reed stopped me because my sound started getting too hillbilly. He actually punched me to get me to stop."

Through the late 60s, he pursued an electric guitar driven, political rock format, while in January 1975, he formed Novably, a rock 'n' roll outfit, who performed spiced versions of the Communist "internationale" along with their own songs – an exhilarating fusion of rockabilly riffing, free jazz and hillbilly fiddling. He recalls trying to get gigs at the downtown New York punk mecca CBGBs (whose initials stand for Country, Blue Grass and Blues). "Because of *Graduation*," he exclaims, "I thought that if anybody had a night to play there I did. I mean those initials describe exactly what I do!" But the club thought otherwise and blew him off. Six months later, punk hit town and his musicians jumped ship, leaving him with a lasting suspicion of a "punk value system" which he considers pervasive. Flynt dismisses "alternative culture" as for the most part "a mystique of self-integration, hollowness and dishonesty, coming forth from the incognito area of the so-called establishment. This mystique is clearly not real. I mean someone who actually was all those things would just melt in their tracks if they were infinitely hollow, alienated. It's if they want to keep falling through the rotten floors of illusion forever. They affirm that as a state."

I ask him if he's interested in developing a different set of values. Flynt looks momentarily puzzled and replies, "You mean, start up a new civilisation? That's what I've been trying to do for 40 years, but there have been no takers." What, then, are his values? Musically speaking, in a key 1980 essay, "The Meaning Of My Avant Garde Hillbilly And Blues Music", he says he "aspires to a beauty which is ecstatic and perpetual, while at the same time being concretely human and emotionally profound". Virtually for its own sake does not interest him. He gives the example of Ornette Coleman as another important influence. "Some major jazz musicians said of him that he couldn't play a major C scale," he says. "Well, that's me. I don't want to play a major C scale. I want to be pushing and pulling, bobbing and weaving at all times." • You Are My Everlovin'/ Celestial Power: New American Ethnic Music Volume 1 is out on Recorded; Graduation And Other New Country And Blues Music is on Ampersand. Flynt's philosophical writings can be found at www.henryflynt.org

salvation



hunters

The monumentally savage pairing of reborn electronic musicians Kevin Martin and Justin Broadrick have been playing their own brand of "deviant independence" for a decade now as Techno Animal, margin-walking music's windupset endzones. Their back catalogue is all over the map. It takes them from the pathological studio evocation of 1991's *Ghosts*, where the throbs of near-silence felt like the aftermath of an explosion, through dub, industrial noise and micro-electronica, to Wagnerian soundtracks, breakbeats and distorted rock. The slippery, multi-dimensional nature of their two-man oeuvre has meant that, until now, they've spent little time under the spotlight. This has only been compounded by a long list of messy interactions with various record labels, and Broadrick and Martin's absolute refusal to stay true to any one genre. Instead they've followed the ever-fluctuating dictates of their soul. With their fifth album *The Brotherhood Of The Bomb (Matador)*, which features collaborations with half a dozen underground rappers, among them Company Flow's ELP, and Sonic Sum, they have hit righteous paydirt. From the opening salvo of "Cruise Mode 101", screaming with the sound of constricted metal and diabolical electric bass while rappers Lumbia and Meta-Mo of Rubberroom spit percussive quicksilver all over the top, it's pedal to the metal all the way. If this is HipHop, then it just grew itself a bloodshot third eye. "For me it's not a HipHop record," bursts Martin. "Partially it is because you have certain elements in there that are true to HipHop, but in the way that it goes beyond categorisation, it's a Techno Animal record."

"I mean, in one way you'd love to feel you're right in the middle of HipHop," he continues. "You're working with rappers left, right and centre, and adopting the codes and vocabulary, but that's not you and it's totally false to do that, so you're left twisting and contorting things to your own needs. It's difficult for anyone to exist with an individual sound – and it always has been – but I've never felt a part of any area I've ever worked in, and that's something that always winds me up, that there are required behavioural or song patterns in order to fit in somewhere. I think that's only true to a genre if you're looking at it as a sales commodity. The fire keeps burning within us, it doesn't feel right to be this or that, we're constantly trying to find something that reflects how we feel psychologically and that's what I always look for in music."

"We had to find our own voice and we found it through technology," jacks up Justin Broadrick from his Midlands hideaway, his voice booming through a crackling superphone in Matador's London HQ. "That was our mission, to go past the conventional acoustic instrumentation that we'd both been brought up with. We were fascinated with the possibilities of technology

but we wanted to mutilate it the same way we mutilated both rock and jazz respectively." Martin, seated across from me, nods emphatically with a fat grin plastered on his face. I have already spoken to him earlier and we have both adjourned upstairs to catch Broadrick on the phone. He nods appreciatively all through the call, as Broadrick restates virtually everything Martin has said downstairs, right down to what they listened to as kids. It's as though they were separated at birth. They both remain unrepentant music obsessives, asking if I've heard anything that's blown me away recently and raving about everything from David S. Ware through Keiji Haino and Mr Len. The same enthusiastic energy fuels their endeavours across a variety of musical forms. Besides Techno Animal, they have individually and collectively manifested no end of new noises, among them The Bug, a Martin-cursed audio tribute to Coppola's *The Conversation* called *Tapping The Conversation*; Ice, whose dub rituals are some of the darkest entries in the duo's back catalogue; Broadrick's Ambient side-project Final; and Martin's collaborations with Sonic Boom's EAR, alongside My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields and AMM's Eddie Prévost. "It all comes from being enthusiastic," Martin beams. "I'm also a journalist, but for me all of these outlets complement each other. Justin and I want to plough our energies into as many different areas as possible." The furrow Martin and Broadrick have been ploughing together goes back a long way.

Martin formed God in 1987, a monstrous jazz bastard with a barely controllable line-up of orchestral proportions, including two bassists, two drummers and two saxophonists, one of which was Martin himself. With a horn sound that was inevitably compared to large, warring mammals, Martin's earliest modus operandi was endearingly straightforward: total agro. "I have to be honest, there were times with God when I simply wanted to drive people out of the room in droves," he confesses. "I had a fight with someone for dancing to us. I thought they were taking the piss. Yeah, sadism was certainly interesting for a time." Martin's childhood, played out in the English south coast town of Weymouth, was similarly brutal. "It was just whiter than white down there," he recalls. "I hardly ever saw a black person and it was very violent due to the all the army and navy bases in the area. I wasn't lucky enough to have an older brother or some hip friends who could guide me in the right direction. I was an only child, watching my mother getting beaten up by my father if he wasn't hurting me, and I had to try and make sense of this or find out what was nonsense. And music was a catalyst for me in changing my whole life. So it's very romantic to me." I ask him if he still believes that art can change the world and he goes all red and starts giggling like a kid. "I do, I do," he laughs. "But it's all become such a commodity, all empty posturing and wallpaper, but it's potentially revolutionary. It changed my life. It touches and moves people mentally as well as physically, that feeling when your insides just heat up with energy and emotion. It's a beautiful thing."

Martin came up on punk rock, with anarcho groups like Discharge and Cross being particularly inspiring. At night he would lie on his bed with a stereo speaker clamped to either side of his head in an endearingly futile attempt to disappear inside the music. Still, he traces his most important influences to the early 80s and genre defiant groups like The Birthday Party, Pene Ute and Public Image Ltd. "Getting a saxophone was important," he explains. "I wish I could say I bought it because of John Coltrane or Albert Ayler, but I bought it because of Theatre Of Hate and The Psychotic Furs, both incredibly bad bands. At the time I was living with some friends who had a four-track and effects, and it

TECHNO ANIMAL'S SEISMIC BROTHERHOOD. JUSTIN BROADRICK AND KEVIN MARTIN, STRADDLE THE FAULTLINES BETWEEN DISTORTED ELECTRONICA, DISTRESSED BEATS AND UNDERGROUND RAP. WORDS: DAVID KEENAN PHOTOS: MATTIAS EK





seemed that everything at that time was just twisted and perverted. So we would slam the saxophone through effects, pitch it down, run it through a delay. I think that whole early BDs thing has indelibly marked my journey through music. Stuff like *The Birthday Party*, you didn't know where they were going. And at the same time you were listening to John Peel and you'd be hearing *Misty In Roots* or Prince Far I. It was a real refer to the mono-culture that was all around me."

Broadrick, meanwhile, had been playing guitar for Birmingham's fastest and loudest, Hepzibah Death. After serving time behind the drums for hardcore noise act Head Of David, he formed Godflesh with bassist G. Christian Green. Godflesh were every bit as sociopathic as God, combining ultra-low gutbusting tunings with singing feedback and distant purgatorial vocals on titles like "Spinebender" and their masterpiece, 1988's *Streetcleaner*.

"I made *Streetcleaner* when I was 19," Broadrick remembers. "I felt intensely nihilistic and I was just hitting out at everything, first and foremost myself. Music is my only language, a vehicle for both what I can and can't be. I find words and thoughts a bit much for me but music lets me be things I can't be normally. It transcends everyday mundanity. We're looking for thrills on every level."

"We're pretty poor emotional cripples without music," Martin interjects. "We suffer bad withdrawal symptoms, but it's more about the empowering nature of music. I don't feel the nihilism has gone but I've allowed myself to feel more emotion and escape from peer pressure. I can't say the music has become a calmer in any way."

The two met when Martin put on the first Godflesh show at his legendary Mule Club in Brixton, South London, where he'd been booking gigs by the likes of Napalm Death and Extreme Noise Terror. "Live, they didn't disappoint," Martin remembers. "However, we were both becoming interested in what a studio could do, both listening to a lot of dub and electronics. With God I was confined to working with people in a certain way, so many musicians and not enough channels on the desk. We'd be driving back from a God/Godflesh tour and Justin and I would be raving about *Pendereck* or *Morricone*."

"Meeting Kevin got me into jazz," says Broadrick. "I realised I could be working on so many different levels. Godflesh was a very primitive thing but I still wanted to keep it pure, to keep it as it was intended to be. With Techno Animal we set out to transcend the confines of Godflesh and God."

Their debut, 1991's *Ghosts*, released on Martin's own now-defunct Pathological label is still a harrowing listen, most effective in the way it plays with silence, like the distant foghorns of "The Dream Forger". Elsewhere the riffs were still intact but the tracks were now assembled round clanking percussion and hideously warped samples. The closing "Spineless" is

the sound of a despairing scream extended through six and a half minutes. "It was a disturbing record," Martin admits. "Much more so than the stuff we had previously been doing. Much as we pick a million holes in it now, when we came up with it, it was a totally liberating experience. It was a direct reaction to the way we had been talked about in the press and all the shows we'd play where people would be shouting at us to turn it up. That's why *Ghosts* has tracks at the other end of the spectrum, near silence. We thought, let's play it more psychologically."

Nevertheless, the reputation of their previous groups preceded them. Even today they're still finding of criticism that would have them as macho pit bulls, forcing the audience into submission with unwavering monomaneiacal sonic assaults. Yet Martin speaks of his music in much more open terms. He talks of their live shows, where strobes and smoke interact with extreme volume, as attempts to liberate the listener from the moment, to pull them straight into the heart of the sound, to lose themselves completely. And the idea of ego-obliterating art as being somehow solely tied up with machismo is laughable — everyone knows femininity can be just as heavy. "I'm not interested in pure noise," Martin retorts. "The idea of just brutalising the audience is absolutely the opposite of what we want to do. Our live shows are almost like sensory deprivation but not to be sadistic about it. It's to allow you to absorb the sound in its purest sense, just the fact that people lose their inhibitions when they can't see the person next to them. That's our aim, to lose ourselves, anything but the fucking numbing neutrality of the everyday. And once you've heard this stuff you can't listen to anything else in the same way. Volume and bass is addictive like hot food."

A turning point in the Techno Animal aesthetic took place during a *Millie Plateaux* tour in the winter of 1997, where Techno Animal shared buses and bills with Atari Teenage Riot's Alec Empire, Porter Ricks, DJ Rush and DJ Spooky. "It was a mad tour," Martin remembers. "We were unleashing some horrendous sounds and people were just flipping out and dancing their asses off — people who hadn't come across anything like it before. That whole effect of playing a club where the sound is geared towards bass and it's not some cheap ass sound system. It's been hard to hone music down to this purely physical entity. Having clubs that were open all night, that were brutally loud and had whose audiences that just wanted to flip to sound was a joy."

Something else that came out of the tour was a collaboration with ATR's Empire, a longtime fan of Techno Animal, on *Curse Of The Golden Vampire*. Attributed to Animal Empire, Curse... is a fantastic mess of overdriven breakbeats and roaring electronics. Empire was particularly taken with one of Broadrick and Martin's many side projects, *The Sidewinder's Colonized CD* (1996). "Alec loved the extremity of production on that," Martin explains. "That's what he wanted. He asked us how to do that because he couldn't do it himself at that stage." *Colonized* is almost an electronic jazz record, with massed live saxophones, guitars and bass all crunched through some heavy post-production. "It was us trying somehow to get away from the idea that electronic music was simply background music," Martin says, who incidentally curated an electronic jazz compilation, *Jazz Satellite* (Virgin). "What I love about early 70s jazz records is the fusion of electronics and real instruments. These alien, hybrid sounds that result from people just trying to find their voice on these things."

At the time Techno Animal were being courted by The Beastie Boys' Grand Royal label. When negotiations

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broke down, Empire's Digital Hardcore label stepped in with a figure to match Grand Royal's offer. "Suddenly we didn't hear from him," says Martin. "We're stupid enough to sit around and wait for these guys. The same thing happened earlier with Bill Laswell, who promised us a deal after our *Re-Entry* album. When we met, we thought they were genuine but it's got more to do with the business people they surround themselves with. It all came at a bad time. I was suffering severe depressions, Earache had just dropped *GodFlesh* and we didn't have a clue what to do. I'd also just spent three years working on the Ice record, *Bad Blood*, and it just felt like this Frankensteinian folly."

Indeed, Ice's *Bad Blood*, on WEA subsidiary Morpheus, is a black hole of a record, though it's very much the blueprint for *The Brotherhood Of The Bomb*. Martin was rediscovering the joys of HipHop through Company Flow records like "Infokill"/"Population Control". He called in ELP, New Flash For Old's Toastie Taylor, and Anti-Pop Consortium. "Psychologically I was falling apart at the seams," Martin admits. "I was fucking with the backing tracks, making it more of a dub album. The label hated it and dropped us; and a lot of the musicians still hate it. There was absolutely nothing radio-friendly about it. Still, without it we couldn't have made the new one."

The same backs against the wall frustration supercharges *The Brotherhood Of The Bomb*. "Hell" pairs thousand-yard breakbeats with air raid sirens and dalek's relentless rhyming, all fucked up with infernal bass and distortion, while Toastie Taylor's vocals on "Piranha" crosses the primal evocations of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago with the streetwalking logic of Lee Perry. The whole record comes coated in a silvery layer of static that makes it sound like the music is fighting its way through a snowstorm of shortwave.

"A lot of this new electronica stuff is very sterile," Martin asserts. "Originally we were excited by drum 'n' bass, not the formulas but the desperation to find new sounds, new sounds that are very obviously energizing, not alienating. During preproduction we just became obsessed by the textures of the sound, and we began to sample our own sounds over and over again; we fell in love with a whole vocabulary of effects - reverbs, delays, distortions. We still love the magic of sound, we literally see music as a form of sorcery. That's a beautiful thing, whether it's on a primal level like the Japponica musicians or whether it's Riche Hawtin."

"For most of the rappers it was as alien an experience as it was for us," he continues. "People like Sonic Sum come from the opposite end of the spectrum. So it's challenging for them and I think that's what they got off on, the friction that comes from culture clash. But lyrically we didn't feel the need to talk to these guys. We trusted them and knew their stuff, so we would tailor tracks to what we thought was appropriate for their voices. Before we started recording there were various conversations, where we were talking of approaching KRS-1, Kool Keith and Chuck D, real formative influences, but it wasn't true to us. The hardcore mentality that we wanted was coming from people who were looking forward. People who were tearing shit up."

"But to be pissed off isn't enough," Martin concludes. "We wanted more, something that reflects the anger you feel to your core but also something that energises people. It's not a hammer over the head, it's self expression, intricate and intense, angry and deep." □ *The Brotherhood Of The Bomb* is out now on Matador. *The Bug's Seismic EP* will be released in November on Morpheus



Heaven's rising angel: ex-God Kevin Martin (opposite page) and GodFlesh's Justin Broadrick (this page)

Unquiet soul

IN THE WORLD OF A STREET-LEVEL
DETECTIVE, THERE IS NO SUCH THING
AS A COMPLETELY INNOCENT CASE.
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BY JEFF GIBSON
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF GIBSON





The staff at the Cité de la Musique look amused. Over the past few days, the rear lobby of the prestigious Paris music complex has been transformed into an exotic oasis called *Le Jardin Magnétique* (The Magnetic Garden). Artificial palm trees and cacti rise up from the floor, their trunks and stems wreathed with yellow-green cables. A motley group of visitors sporting cordless headphones make their way among them, picking up the sounds of lions, crickets and a host of unidentifiable creatures as they pass from one plant to the next. Stooping to listen to a cactus or a shrub, they are struck by the contrast between the artificial plants and the natural environs. Even more disquieting are the sounds themselves: they have little in common with the images of nature propagated by television and advertising. Meanwhile, the constructor of this meditation on artifice and reality, Berlin-based artist Christine Kubisch, buzzes about putting the finishing touches to her installation. "This piece is about going back to the origin of something we've lost trace of," she explains. "I want to trigger reactions in people and get them to ask themselves about their own memories and experiences of natural sounds. The true and the false, what is virtual nature and what is real nature, is a theme I've been working on for many years."

Kubisch has been using sound and visuals to reconfigure people's perception of the world for more than 20 years now. One of the leading exponents of that once marginal activity known as sound art, she is only now beginning to enjoy wider recognition, as multidisciplinary work becomes increasingly widespread throughout the art world. The approach has always come perfectly naturally to Kubisch however. "I was always in between art and music," she comments. "I never could make up my mind – and I don't think it's so unusual. People always have several talents, but from the beginning school tells you to choose just one discipline, and asks you to be so perfect in it that you don't even have the courage to do something different. When I started, I was really regarded as someone who could neither play music nor make visual art."

Today, Kubisch provokes markedly different reactions. In 2000 alone, she was invited to stage three solo exhibitions in Germany, including a 20-year retrospective in Rüsselsheim. She also participated in a number of group exhibitions across Europe, in Luxembourg, Berlin and Amsterdam, as well as London's Sonic Boom, curated by David Toop. This year's projects include works commissioned for Switzerland and Korea, as well as a series of installations in a new museum of light in Germany, based on the minute sounds emitted by neon and fluorescent tubes and other light sources. And now the American label Amperсанд has just released two CDs of her collaborations with video artist Fabrizio Plessia. One is a reissue of their 1977 LP *Two And Two*. For this piece, the duo produced outlandish sounds on a variety of instruments and objects ranging from an accordion to a vibrator, while minute details of their performance – a hand movement, the tip of a vibrator touching strings – were filmed and projected live across a bank of video monitors, presenting the audience with onstage action and the video camera's subjective view of it. The video images of the duo's sound production were as hard to identify as the noises emerging from their filmed activity, making for an unusual and disorientating experience both visually and musically. The second CD, *Tempo Liquido*, features a taped collage comprising a steel drum and a cantion, overlaid by the sometimes heavily amplified sounds of a sheet of glass being rubbed with a thimble. "At the time we were really trying to create new sounds with whatever we could find," she remembers.

Kubisch has always been something of a musical outsider. Born in Bremen in 1948, she studied both

art and music, majored in flute, piano and composition. But she soon realized that she did not want to play only music composed by others. She subsequently attended the Jazz Academy in Graz, Austria, and spent several years playing in the college's big band. "After that, I found out that I was not an improviser either," she sighs. "I didn't have the talent a real jazz musician has to have." In 1974 she decided to turn to an entirely electronic music, only to find the experience just as unsatisfying. "In electronic music they had the same approach as in contemporary music," she says. "They were just interested in the sounds from their tapes and nothing around." Anarchic and open-ended, performance art was coming into its own in the 70s. It proved a far more appropriate outlet for Kubisch's yearning for new artistic experiences. Like their Futurist and Dadaist forebears, that decade's pioneering performance artists were seeking to upend the conventions of established art while breaking down the walls between the different disciplines. From 1974 on, Kubisch undertook solo performances integrating visual and acoustic elements. For *Emergency Solos*, she gave a series of flute recitals while wearing mittens, thimbles and even boxing gloves. *A History Of Soundwaves*, which also dates from the mid-70s, was conceived as a reaction against the male-dominated Western musical tradition. A mordant, if capricious experience, it featured squeaking musical postcards bearing images of famous male composers from past centuries. A performance consisted of Kubisch presenting each card one at a time and squeezing it, while a prerecorded tape of squeaking car sounds played in the background.

Her collaborative performances with Fabrizio Plessi, with whom she toured Europe and the States through much of the 70s, were inspired by the same principles as her solo work. Similarly seeking to break down the mystique surrounding the artist, the duo invited the audience to walk around the space during their shows. "I didn't like being on stage and performing and having people sitting on the other side looking at me," comments Kubisch.

Throughout this period, Kubisch made many trips to New York to appear at such experimental venues as The Kitchen and Phil Niblock's Experimental Intermedia Foundation. She also got to make many contacts within the city's flourishing art and music scene. "I met a lot of people who were searching like myself for something different," she remembers. "Cage and Paik were very important to me because they too came from music and they had the courage very early on to move off in other directions. Women like Pauline Oliveros, Annea Lockwood and Laurie Anderson were likewise a source of encouragement, because we had no women composers in Europe. Actually, all the American scene influenced me because they were more open to experimentation than the Europeans." She also shared the Americans' interest in non-Western schools of thought. "I think we were all very interested in Oriental philosophies at the time," she concurs. "I did my regular meditation, but to the extent of becoming a Zen Buddhist, but it was always there, I also read all [philosopher] Rudolf Steiner's works. Even if he wasn't Oriental, he talked a lot about the inner vibration of sounds and considered that every sound had its own life. Of course, when you're looking for new things, you're experimenting on one hand with real objects, but you're also reading like hell to find answers to your questions."

Kubisch's greatest inspiration, however, was John Cage. She remembers, "Of course, when we met in the 70s he was considered this crazy sound guy, the one who made all these noises without any structure and couldn't compose. It was crazy, people hated him

so much." With her performances, particularly her flute pieces, eliciting a similar reaction, it's small wonder that she felt especially close to Cage. "People got so upset," she sighs. "That's why it was important for me to know about the Fluxus people and meet Cage. It was like being normal finally and not being out of everything." In 1952 Cage had organized the groundbreaking multimedia event at Black Mountain College in North Carolina that opened the way to the wealth of possibilities opened up by the interaction of different artforms. Meanwhile his own work was challenging the composer's hegemony. "I liked his way of putting together many different actions and the fact that his pieces weren't ready-made," Kubisch says. "You had to make choices and take part in them. With my installations it's the same. You have to make choices in order to hear them, you have to move around and become involved. Then again, everything was predictable at that time in European music. For a flute piece, for instance, I would have to rehearse very hard for two weeks. But it didn't matter to Cage whether the result was perfect or not, what was important was that you had the experience." Cage inspired Kubisch to adopt a similarly non-interventionist approach in her installation work. "Like Cage, I allow chance to happen," she says. "For instance, I use solar cells in some of my installations and I never know what the weather will do. I leave it open—here are fantastic moments and boring moments."

By the end of the 70s, Kubisch was tiring of live performance. In 1980, she began studying electronics at the Technical Institute of Milan in an attempt to find more flexible methods of sound diffusion. It proved a liberating experience. "I didn't need any more instruments and people to play the music," she asserts. "I could really go on and experiment and although I didn't have much money to do so, there were so many little gadgets you could use."

Electronics freed her from the temporal constraints of live performance. Instead she could create spaces for visitors to explore in their own time. It also allowed her to map out complex, multifaceted scenarios and landscapes through the deployment of sound around the installation room. Kubisch was well aware how the visitors' perceptions of the soundtrack altered as they moved around the space. "I have never liked the typical concert hall situation, where the audience is not allowed to move and can only listen from one point of the room," she firmly states. To evade the concert hall's structures she began creating her first sound installations. For *Il Respiro Dei Mare* (1981), she developed her own magnetic induction system—essentially a sound apparatus without speakers consisting of two differently coloured wire reliefs installed on opposite walls, which visitors accessed by holding cube-shaped receivers to their ears. People in the vicinity of the blue wire relief intercepted sounds of ocean waves, while the red companion produced sounds of calm breathing. By moving between the two reliefs, the people mixed these elements to create their own sound environment. At this stage, sound installation was still in its infancy, despite the work of such pioneers as Max Neuhaus. "The term wasn't known back then," Kubisch explains. "People like Hans Peter Kuhn and Rolf Julius were starting out at the same time, but none of us really knew where we were going."

Kubisch went on to use and develop her magnetic induction system in many of her pieces. By introducing cordless headphones in works like *The Conference Of Trees* (1988-89), she increased the audience's freedom of movement, as well as improving the sound quality. Placing five bonus trees around a conference table, she draped their trunks with yellow-green electronic wire, which transmitted sounds to anyone close

enough to pick them up. By moving round the table, visitors could blend the characteristic rustling of each tree and make them speak at the same time. Even as it conjured up a variety of humorous associations, the piece emphasized that natural phenomena are as deserving of attention as human activities. Like her other works juxtaposing nature and technology, *The Conference Of Trees* was intended as a comment on the way humans invaded people's space. "Of course, technology is taking over today and is being used as a substitute for human and natural activities," she warns. "So many people think that machines can do everything better than human beings and whenever you talk about better, people consider you ideological or romantic, or even retarded. I try to go against that."

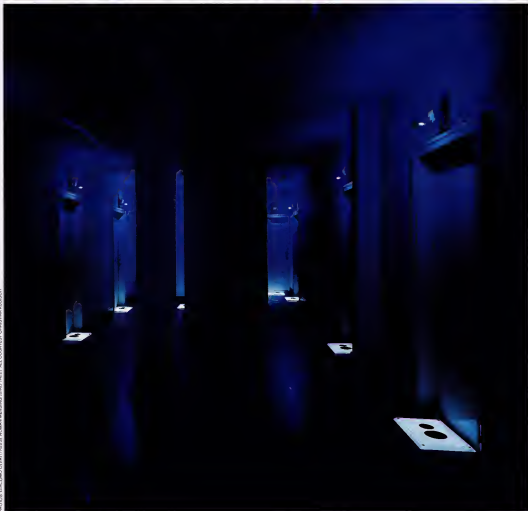
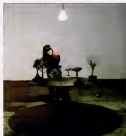
Kubisch's installations put everyday technology to creative use. She adapted her magnetic induction system from equipment originally developed for telephones. Since 1986 she has likewise been exploring the artistic potential of ultraviolet light, which is normally used in museums or scientific research. "I like these lights because they reveal things you normally pass by," Kubisch enthuses. "When you shine an ultraviolet light on an old wall, for example, you see all the traces of its history. Like in my works on nature where I'm questioning what remains of real nature, in the pieces where I use ultraviolet light, I'm questioning the history of the space and what remains of the original structure."

She has used the light to dramatic effect in pieces like *Sechs Spiegel*, an installation realised in the Ludwigskirche in Saarbrücken in 1994, the sound component of which was issued as a CD by the Berlin-based Edition RZ label. Here she evoked the church's history by placing thousand year old slate slabs treated with a light-sensitive pigment along the organ gallery. Ultraviolet lights exposed their intricate surface structures, turning them into glowing lunar landscapes, while sounds of vibrating dinner glasses—whose pauses, repetitions and durations were determined by the church's architectural proportions—suffused the interior. Kubisch has always been drawn to the history and characteristics of particular sites, and the memories they evoke. "I am a post-war child and I played in the ruins of burnt down and bombed out houses all the time," she says. "Maybe that's why I'm interested in the atmosphere and aura of spaces."

In Kubisch's spaces, the aim is not to create synaesthetic associations between acoustic and visual phenomena, but to set up the conditions in which they reinforce and amplify one another. In *Twelve Doors And Twelve Sounds* (2000) she associated ultraviolet light with ultrasound to create a work that transcended the frontiers both of the visible and the audible. Loudspeakers illuminated by ultraviolet lamps mapped out a room's interior architecture, while ultrasonic generators created 12 separate soundtracks, whose frequencies were lowered by electronic control devices until they were just audible to the human ear. Kubisch explains, "When you lower these sounds just to the point where you can't hear them, it's like the subtlest sort of sound that is there and yet not there. It's so strange, because every time you come near them, they seem to have disappeared and gone elsewhere. Some people say that they can feel them, even though they can hardly hear them. And they work very well with black light, because when you have a space lit with black light, you can't see where you are, and when you also have sounds you can't identify, it's even stranger."

In *The Clocktower Project* (1997) she used solar

Strategies against noise and tradition blowhouse from top left: a tree huggar at The Conference Of Trees; intermingled dead white and living blue at Mare; the sea breeze at The Blue Tree at the Rijksmuseum retrospective; one of Kubisch's soundscapes; ultraviolet ultrasonics from Twelve Doors And Twelve Sounds



PHOTOS: JACQUES DESA (TOP LEFT); SHAWN MCGUIN (TOP MIDDLE); ALL COURTESY CHRISTIAN KROSCHE

energy, which she has been employing since 1991, to achieve an similarly disorientating effect. The clocktower in question dominates the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, located in the old mill town of North Adams. Up until 1965, its bells regulated the workday of its former occupants, a print works and an electric company. Kubisch combined the ringing of the bells into sequences by using a specially designed software program, which reacted to information about the intensity and position of the sun transmitted by a band of solar panels placed around the tower. The bell chimes she programmed to peel on the quarter-hour created patterns that varied according to the weather. Bright sunlight generated clear, distinct tones as opposed to the soft and blurred output on cloudy days. In this way her installation sensitised viewers to climatic changes by enabling them to "hear light", as she put it. For the older residents of the neighbourhood, meanwhile, it served as a reminder of the bell's history. "Some of them told me they got used to this new way of keeping time and really liked it," she beams.

Although Kubisch is best known for her installation work, she has also produced a number of non-visual pieces that testify to her abiding interest in environmental sounds, as opposed to music per se. "I enjoy listening to the sounds around me so much that I don't feel the necessity to listen to music regularly," she says. "I'm very sensitive to sounds – I can't just listen to them going by – so every time I listen to something it's a big effort." Like the compositions accompanying her installations, these minimalist pieces focus on the intrinsic properties of sound, such as colour and timbre. "Composing for me is very often just shaping sounds, rather than inventing new ones," Kubisch continues. "I might lower the pitch of a sound or change the time, and then I put many sounds together and make mixes." *Old Sounds* Archive (1999), which appears on the CD accompanying the catalogue of the Klangraumlichtzeit (Soundspace/lighttime) exhibition in Rüsselsheim, is an imposing, elegiac piece made from bell sounds – the deep, resonant tones of church, ship-bells and others. "It's about all the old sound signals that everybody used to understand," she says. "It's a language that has been lost, but the sounds still have such a crazy energy and presence."

Nostalgico (1999), from the same CD, won a composition prize at a festival in Heidelberg. Here, taped creaking and squeaking doors and a live accordion playing a fragmented melody echo each other uncannily. As door sounds conjure a physical space, the nostalgic melody evokes the passing of time. Some of Kubisch's sound installations work well without the visuals. The *Sechs Spiegel* CD in particular is a supremely satisfying listen. The fluid, ethereal whines of fingers rubbing the edge of drinking glasses combine in a fascinating, ever-changing interplay.

Like her music, Kubisch's installations are never jarring or intrusive. "Because I had a classical training in music and visuals, I have a certain feeling for what is beautiful and I can't get away from it," she says. "I can't do very loud pieces, for instance, that's impossible for me." More than just "beautiful", however, they're frequently surrounded by a magical, enchanting aura. "I live in a big city and my life is a lot of stress, travelling, working, family and everything," Kubisch continues. "I never have a quiet moment and I'm nostalgic about being elsewhere, but when I get there I don't find what I'm looking for, and mostly it's just in my mind. So these spaces express our desire for a paradise we can't have."

At first glance, *Öttinger Music* looks like a very elegant dinner table, but on close inspection it's apparent that everything is made of plastic, while the plates are really small, flat, white speakers playing different

pieces of music at the same time. "It looks very beautiful, but to listen to it is really hell!" Kubisch smiles. "That often happens in my work – it looks very nice, but after a while there's this question about what it really is. But then when you look at nature, you so often have places that look very nice, but after a while you realise that something is wrong. I had a residency last year at the Djerassi Foundation, which is one of the most isolated places in the Santa Cruz mountains, and every 15 minutes a big plane was crossing over, so you never had a quiet moment."

Silence – or rather its absence – is a theme that crops up in several of Kubisch's works. For her 1996 installation *On Silence* she collected fragments of poems and prose on the subject by Goethe, Klee, Beckett and Rilke, among others. Her aim was to reveal the simple paradox: when silence is mentioned, it is always defined in terms of the sounds it evokes. Rilke, for instance, refers to the sounds of the wind and trees. These texts were printed with fluorescent pigment on sheets of plexiglass and placed beneath money testers whose ultraviolet lamps made the letters visible. Viewers could then go through the installation, asking themselves whether these descriptions were true or false – like someone testing the authenticity of a banknote. While reading these historical texts on silence, they could also listen to the incidental noises in the gallery, computer whirs and light bulb hums, in other words, the sounds which constitute our contemporary silence. "This was an important piece for me because it made me realise that there are always the sounds of computers, that's our silence today," she says. In some respects, Kubisch's views regarding technology's pervasive impact on daily lives echo those of Canadian acoustic ecologist and soundscape composer R. Murray Schafer. "I have met him and studied his work and I think it's extremely important," she agrees. "He talks a great deal about listening, for instance. I listen a lot and I have also done some Deep Listening workshops with Pauline Oliveros about ways of listening to sounds. But Murray's views are very black and white: he's against any other noises besides nature. In many ways he's right, but I don't think it's helpful to tell people what they should and should not do. I want to make people aware of what's going on, that's my way of telling them. Instead of saying it's bad to have a computer and it's good to have a singing bird at home, I just say: 'This is a singing bird and this is the sound of a computer: which do you prefer?'" In her view, Schafer's ideas have had a considerable impact on Canadian artists working with environmental sounds, whereas their European counterparts tend to focus on aesthetic preoccupations. "We're more the sound art faction," she quips.

Today, the sound art faction is stronger than ever, and Kubisch has become part of a globalising elite comprising such other pioneers as Hans Peter Kuhn, Robin Minard and Rolf Julius. "We have been at the same festivals over the years and just now we have this big show at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh," she comments. That they and many other sound artists live in Berlin is no coincidence, she says, continuing, "Sound art started in Germany and the States, and Berlin is really the centre of it because there are so many events going on here." One example is the recent *Sonambiente* festival, which exhibited projects by a host of sound artists in venues all over the city. For Kubisch, the event confirmed that both artists and audiences are taking an increasing interest in multidisciplinary work. "The public too is aware of the relationships between sound and visuals or sound and architecture," she concludes. "Today, mixing visuals and music is so normal that you don't even notice it." □ Two And Two and Tempo Liquido are out now on Ampersand



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Words
Peter
Szapiro

Photos
Sebastian
Meyer

In the January 2001 issue of the American version of *Stuff* magazine, they named the "100 Most Dangerous Men On Earth". At number 93 — ahead of Bill Gates and Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich, and just behind former Cheers star Ted Danson — was "the Sid Vicious of Techno", Kid606 (né Miguel Depedro). From his early, post-gabba 12"s on San Diego's electro-punk label Vinyl Communications to the occasionally mindblowing, always vicious HipHop and R&B cut-ups that he's been doing recently, Kid606 has flouted copyright laws with more glee than anyone since Negativland and The Bomb Squad. He has cranked out and cranked up in-your-face feedback whorls without resorting to "bad music for bad people" type vibes and generally brought the aesthetics of the moshpit into electronica's tawdry, dour bedsit. And just for an encore he went on to create alliances with former Metal bad boy Mïss Patton and thrown Bkara Kill samples into his remixes. His punk, DIY antics are enough to strike fear into the hearts of men who like their Pete Namlook electronics as sleek and dull and ignorable and polite as their IKEA furniture. Of course, electronic music, particularly in these post-rave days, is about the least dangerous thing around — as smug and smooth and uniform and unchallenging as a freeloading fashion PR bathing in Crème De La Mer in an Ian Schrager boutique hotel — so anyone with a laptop and a slightly bad attitude is bound to disrupt some Apple carts without even trying.

Though it once threatened to be the most exciting thing since punk — indeed, it almost motivated a frighteningly apathetic generation into action when the government threatened to cut their access to drugs and repetitive beats — electronic music has been thoroughly assimilated into corporate capitalism, and the small wing that hasn't is pretty much the sole preserve of the dreaded gearhead (at least in American English). "I'm not going to put on my record that it was made with this, this and this," Depedro sneers, half declaring war on the packface IDM (Intelligent Dance Music) massive from the dishevelled, collegiate halls of residence-like headquarters of his Tigerbeat6 empire in Oakland, California. "Just that people think about it bugs me, not what I'm doing or not, or that I think doing it is wrong... It's like Van Halen. You've got millions of fans; you have guys who scream and get drunk to your music and guys who just wanna rock and hang around pick-up trucks listening to Van Halen. And then you have that five per cent of geeks who care what weight guitar strings you used. With electronic music, we never had the girls, we never had the guys in the pickup trucks, we started with that five per cent and we're trying to grow out of it and that's why it's such an uphill battle. There are a lot of artists that I know that want to be like, 'Let's rock out'. You know, they get a drummer, they try to be a band. I don't think it works too well, but it is trying to get away from your original audience. Of course, your original audience is going to hate you, but the idea is that the people who go along with you are going to be much more appreciative of what you're doing. On the other hand, you've got people like Pole who are just trying to keep it to that five per cent. That's the people we get tons of shit from: [adopts stupid voice] 'Don't pimp our IDM to the masses'. It sucks that the IDM list [the Internet's long running 'intelligent dance music' newsgroup] is like our drama to make things seem more exciting. No one's getting shot over it, no one is getting beat up over it, it's really not worth mentioning. Because we don't have any excitement to have to resort to that is really bad."

Instead, Kid606 lets his music do the talking and generate the excitement, not just his Max patches or his petty spats. That's why he is the most dangerous man in electronic music. Yet this enfant terrible so easily could have been higher in *Stuff*'s chronicle of danger. At number two was "NSync and Backstreet Boys avenged Lou Pearlman. Serious electronics

I did a remix
for kid606 and
all I got was this
lousy t-shirt.





10

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11





spotters might remember that before becoming the name of the Kid's label, Tigerbeat6 was the name of the semi-parodic laptop boy band (four barechested 'bunks' making love not to the camera but to their Powerbooks) which the Kid and fellow traveller Cox (aka Ryan Kidwell) were going to form during their days at Vinyl Communications. While it may not be one of the great 'could have beens' of music history, just the prospect of *Teen People* or *Smash Hits* running a feature entitled "Would You Let Your Daughter Go Out With A Tigerbeat6?" should have been enough to put the Kid in *Stuff's* top 20.

"The whole thing of combining teen angst with a new form of music is really selling yourself short as a musician," Depedro declares. "I don't think it can take you very far, it's just a downwards spiral. Your music being used as just the soundtrack to someone's angry rants is the scariest thing I've ever thought of." He may have a point, but surely some of the best music ever made is that sort of thing – Black Flag, Ramones, early Rolling Stones. "I don't think they're pandering though," Depedro counters. "When I hear stuff like Atari Teenage Riot, Green Day, all the post-Nirvana stuff, I think it's total pandering. I think it's like, 'We can get an audience through doing this.' The people who were doing it for real were like Swans, Joy Division, Velvet Underground, people who would have done it with or without. What I'm saying is people who are doing that as their entry way: 'We'll get everyone's attention, have them chant along with us and then we'll try to sell them our Ambient record.' Don't get me wrong, I think Atari Teenage Riot have done more good than I just have to be a little more wary about it because that's where I get thrown into."

So long as he gets lumped in with electronic music's angry brigade, The Rolling Stones comparison isn't as fatuous as it might appear on first glance and may be a more appropriate point of comparison. His music may not be about power, lust or depravity, but Kid606's wildly electric DSP cut-ups and remixes of HipHop and R&B tracks are the 21st century equivalent of Mick and Keef channeling the energy of the blues and Chuck Berry in an attempt to articulate blind white rage. Check his famous remix of NWA's "Straight Outta Compton," where he jams a screwdriver into the CD player's door while he's recording, spits vinegar over his vinyl copy and walks on the EQ to create a scurrious Tourette's symphony of deracinated curse words and street attitude. Or his forthcoming Kid666 release, "Take The Piss On" (from the Violent Turd EP, *Freackitchickly*), a love letter to sorts to Missy Elliott in which an abrasive Junglist remix of "Get Ur Freak On" suddenly becomes an abrasive Junglist remix of A-ha's "Take On Me".

A competing version of this fundamental drive of 20th and 21st century popular music is offered by his Oakland neighbours (literally around the corner), the underground HipHop crew Anticon. But where they desperately try to remake HipHop in their own neurotic, intellectual voices, Kid606 is perhaps more problematic, merely messing with the shiny surfaces of black cultural products rather than the meaning. And so much of popular music's message has always been its surface, its grain, the 'simple' and bare essence of its sound – a fact only amplified by the garish production values of contemporary R&B – so how problematic is this really? Coming at the Kid's music from a British perspective where so much contemporary music is aggressively solipsistic, denying that there's even a world outside of the artist's bedroom, at least he's engaging with something. Like much of what the Kid does, it has attracted its fair share of controversy. Last year in an article in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, wire contributor Masi Reeves wrote of Kid606's breakthrough *Down With The Scene* album (released last year on Mike Patton's Ipecac label), "Kid606 plays fast and loose with ideas on his

banks of computers, samplers and other sonic equipment; at one point he intersperses a menacing, disembodied black? voice who says, 'I'll kill you, nigger'... [H]is album, as enjoyable as it may be at times, raises disconcerting questions through its appropriation of black music; one wonders what Kid 606's seemingly innocuous forays will eventually lead to?" Meanwhile, *U2* magazine ran an article about electronics musicians' somewhat ambivalent relationship with R&B superstars.

"That article, the Timbaland versus IDM thing, about all these artists ripping off black culture," remarks Depedro, opening his and other musicians' defence, "what happened was, they were all cool about taking to me and Cox and stuff, but when they started to talk to Matmos, they realised that Matmos were not down with the underground HipHop rhythms, they were these rich guys. And they were like, 'You guys are just stealing black rage'. It's like, 'Wait a second, they're stealing black rage?' I mean it's like, come on. They're kind of studious about black music and maybe it came from a more academic standpoint, but it's such a ridiculous accusation. When I was doing it, I think it in Oakland who comes from a fucked up family, that's totally cool... It's such a stupid thing to think that music is still... If you're going to trace a big map about all the stuff in music from blues and R&B to rock to what I write, I think I'd end up with a line covering whose songs, start with that but don't try to bring something up now about some guy in Sweden or something ripping off Timbaland's rhythms as some kind of like Aryan thing, which is just so not what it was. It's just that thing where everything is more interesting when there's a conflict."

In America right now, white teenagers are strutting around in baggy jeans and backwards baseball caps with that faux gangsta lean calling each other 'Niggas'. Aside from the eternally touchy issue of who's proffing and why is Eminem bigger than Rakim ever was, such racial confidence games are certainly more complex than they used to be. But what's perhaps most fascinating is that this remaining of African-American music used to be the sole preserve of white British musicians – think Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds, Northern Soul and Rare Groove, ABC and Duran Duran, House and Techno. Why have Britain's contemporary pop musicians now decided to largely ignore black American music in favour of endless versions of Abba, Nick Drake and Radiohead? Kid606 goes some way towards an explanation in his description of his run-ins with the British music press. "For me to finally, in the past two years, not get thrown into the middle Aphex Twin thing, it's only been in America," he says. "In America I can do articles and it won't be like the first time I did an interview with one of the British magazines where it was like, 'Hi, talk to me about Alec Empire. So, you like Aphex Twin, talk shit about Funkstörung, say you like Autotech'. Then, it's like, 'Oh, this is the next Aphex Twin'. I think that whole style of journalism is disgusting. If they're going to hear about it and like it, they're gonna want to put it in, they'll go out and buy it, they'll love it. To say, 'Here, pay attention to me' is the stupidest thing in America that's ever happened. Obviously, there's lazy journalists and there's always going to be comparisons in describing things, but there'll be journalists who get this on their desks and they won't have been into Aphex Twin. I'm just glad that not through always trying to keep up, and not having music be so important, it's more apt to kind of let things change and ebb and flow. I think musicians in the UK would do much more interesting stuff if they weren't always trying to keep up with Autotech, Aphex Twin and the things they feel are important. In America, obviously, it's spread out a million times more and so much bigger, but it's also a little more scenery and there's more of a community. People needed a community to interact over a music which essentially

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wasn't ours, but then when people in America started to make our own music that was kind of under the whole umbrella [of IDM] it just felt independent and free. You know, there's people like Venetian Snares putting out this hilarious dancehall-polska-punk 7", there's clubs all over the US that will play it and support it. It just seems really healthy in a way for there not to be people looking at it, for journalists not to be even caring. I'll go to shows with [housewife and Hardcore DJ] Awearyem and he'll play to like 400 people and he'll span a record that was pressed up at 400 copies and no one will know who it is and no one will care, but it will get everyone on their feet and totally insane and change people's lives and that's what it's all about. I bring that up because in order to do that and not to care, you really have to detach yourself from a lot of journalists. I remember when I first started to get attention from that kind of stuff, you care. And to even read it is to acknowledge it, and to acknowledge it is to let it into your head and to want to work for it. It's a 'you're working for them, they're not working for you' kind of thing... If you just flip through the NME you can write down '20 Easy Steps To Appeal To NME Journalists'. If that's what most musicians in the UK are doing, then that's really sad."

Unsurprisingly, for a kid of 22, Depedro is a motormouth, hyperactive ball of energy. Even though he talks so fast, his mouth still can't keep up with his mind - ideas keep spilling out on top of each other, just like his music. Nevertheless, where too many of his peers sound like they're sucking their thumbs while in a foetal position on an unmade bed, Kid606's records aren't pure sugar rushes or mere romper room tantrums either. Not that you could accuse him of excessive maturity. "I'm really against the whole kids talking and the cutesy melody stuff because that's not like my childhood at all," Depedro spits. "I think it's amusing when Aphex Twin puts his parents on talking about how much equipment he has and singing 'Happy Birthday' on the record, but with me personally I've always been a child and it's a way of trying to stay a child. It was maybe my way of not having to grow up in one way, but also forcing me to be responsible. It wasn't like I had the choice of going to college and making music, it was like I couldn't stand the thought of being a bum or having a day job. But at the same time, doing it, you are constantly on tour and constantly avoiding real work and having too much fun doing stupid shit."

"I think lots of musicians get obsessed with their childhood or how they came out the way they are; writers are too," he continues. "Everything I learned I learned by the age of ten," you know, so like constantly working with that stuff as some inspirational impetus for what they do, but I think it's this weird self-paedophilia. I don't like who I am right now, I was better then". Which I don't have at all [laughing] because I like who I am now way better, but a lot of musicians are like that. Cex is definitely like that. He's totally an uncomfortable adult. He's so far from adulthood. He has to get a tattoo every couple of months because it somehow keeps him from growing up. He has all these songs about Wall Street and stuff. He has this idea, his dad is a medical lawyer, that that is adulthood. It's kind of funny that you have to be such a child to stay a child. I think it's the kind of thing that most people will get past if they need to, but me, I've only recently been passed that. Turning 21 I didn't even realise, but turning 22 it's like, 'Jesus Christ, Kid606 is dead. This is the stupidest thing on earth.' I felt so old, I did all this serious, old music, I could never imagine making the music I'm making now, which is like this really hard, abrasive, but yet, not playful, but bring, sarcastic, kind of music that's not just going to be hard and obnoxious. I think there was this review of this EP in *The Wire* where it was like, 'Kid606 is all grown up

now'. I think it was because I felt totally grown up. It totally wasn't me. I still love the music and I think it's perfect, but I think it was me using the music to push me in a certain direction, making me feel older, kind of like, 'I'm in love, I've been through all these serious relationships. Where I was before, it's not.' It's like the way people that are kind of mature would like push childishness to keep them down, keep that appeal, keep that justifiability as a little bit of a musician. The last track I made that was kind of more mature, more whatever, I called 'Act Your Age', which was a total response to that: 'This is the music you should be making at this kind of age'. I was like, 'Yeah, I know'. "The people I know," Depedro continues, "the older they are, the more they can handle noise and musical variety; and the younger they are they're either into Hardcore, the scene of it, or punk, the fashion of it. Anyone else, what they do is just listen to Boards Of Canada and bleak, melodic IDM shit; and the more I feel myself getting into that the more I feel I'm just maturing into this bad, negative, realising that you can just make a million of these songs. The only kind of music I want to make is 'you can only make one or two of these tracks and then you have to do something different', if you can milk something, it's really not that artistically healthy... The whole electronic musician as Freudian quest for immaturity, I don't want to grow up. I'm an IDM kid". I just don't even get that... "If I could make a good, bymbumbers jungle track I would do it. That's what I'm always trying to do and always fucking up... if I ever have to stick out a Top 40 dance track, I ain't going to put in some fart samples to keep it out of that."

While the young have always been the future, what's most startling about this recent generation of musicians is how little they think about it. Not only do they all seem to be on career paths to hell, but there's no vision, no horizon, nothing but the here and now. Another thing that sets Kid606 apart from his peers is that his catalogue shows growth. Here we're not talking about the grotesque 'maturation' of a singles artist into an album artist or the escalating tedium of someone who used to make music for and about the dancefloor now dissipating the pleasures of sitting on the sofa with their significant other. Rather, the development of someone with an eye on the future, who even admits that a future is possible and it won't necessarily suck. From his earliest bleats of white noise with rhythm like *Don't Sweat The Technique* and *Dubplate Style* through the skipping CD githscapes of his group *Disc* (with Lesser and Matmos), to the notous, scintillating play of textures and references of his most recent work, the Kid's music has gotten more sophisticated without ever sacrificing the punk spirit that first propelled him into music making as a teenager in San Diego. "When I was young I thought nothing was new," he says. "I felt like I couldn't make music because everything was already defined. There was no new music. There was a time when I wasn't wanted to give up. There's already noise, there's already jungle, there's already Techno, there's already this, and it's like what do you make out of all of a sudden I was like, 'I'm just gonna make whatever', and it turned out that 'whatever' became something. It wasn't enormous, but it became enough for people to care. It happened at the same time when lots of record labels weren't releasing new kinds of music, but that started a whole bunch of new labels that pushed things that weren't around before."

"That's what I think is interesting about what we're doing now and the people that I work with, is that it's gonna be different," he continues. "Not now, but it's going to change and it's going to occur. To say that my next record is going to be a double CD and it sounds like a *Down With The Scene* rehash, or to say that everything we do is going to sound like what we've done in the past, then I just want to kill myself right now... Where we're going may not be good, it may not



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be bad, but at least we're going somewhere. Every fucking music I got into, from Godflesh to Porter Ricks, everything just dug a grave for itself. It's so sad to say that about so many people that you respect as musicians—Autechre, Aphex Twin, all those people—and then to say, 'Well, I'm not going to do that.' I don't want to do that, but it's something you've got to be aware of. They did just work with musicians who sounded like themselves, they did perpetuate it and they did just make music for journalists... What you have to do is to create something new, not wait for it to come to you. I think there's some really awesome stuff coming out. I love Mille Plateaux because it's really not money with them, they spend so much more money on things than they actually make back. Other labels, it's like, 'We've got to do something different to keep profit high and sell more records'. Achim's [Szepanski, MP boss] like, 'I want something different'... If there isn't a new, weird, cool Hip-Hop out-of, experimental DSP record, then Tigerbeatz is going to have to do something else. We're going to have to do something crazy or a Phenomenon record or something because it's going to have to keep going."

In order for both Tigerbeatz and electronic music as a whole to keep going, Depedro thinks that it has to veer closer to good, old-fashioned rock 'n' roll virtues. This is evident not just in Kid606 making plain the connections between digital distortion and the holy sacrament of an overdriven Peavey amp straining at the seams, but in his whole philosophy. "I loved punk music and I was on a punk label," he gushes. "I loved [San Diego punk label] Gravy and I worked with Gravy. The music was great and everything since then was just to reclaim that. It was the whole thing of taking those same ideals and putting them into a different context which no one agreed with. It's so funny that now people come to my shows in Gravy T-shirts, and when I tell them that I was totally involved with all that but just did something different, it makes you feel positive that you can like something but do something else. It's like if someone from Detroit makes electro-techno music, it's like, 'Yeah, so?' But if someone from Jamaica does that, then it's like a story right there.... To market Tigerbeatz to the IDM audience and try to make them happy—we got a Mira Calix remix or a Plaid mix or tour with Funkstörung or shit like that—great, but that's a lot of work to have your music downloaded or given away. It's a thing that eventually can't perpetuate itself, especially when everyone that's buying the music is trying to make it themselves. They're going to buy the CD just to get the email address, so they can email you and ask you what you use so they can do it themselves. But at the same time, Blackum from Blackdown sell more of live shows than any other band on Tigerbeatz, because it's such a good show and people want to take it home. They basically saw the record. You know you didn't have to get someone to buy it off the Website. Those are people who aren't going to try to do the same thing. The more fans who buy records who aren't going to try to do the same thing, the healthier you are. That's the problem with Mille Plateaux and DHR: every fucking CD you sell is another demo you're gonna get in the mail. I know that's not the case with Ipecac. I really want to try to keep things in that direction. I think it's so important that everyone tours and plays live....

"I don't know anyone who hasn't been happier on tour than at home," he continues. "I mean everyone I know is depressed, is miserable, wants to escape. I had to tour for two years straight because I didn't have any place to live. Everyone's trying to escape something... In America, a tour's like a double win, especially if you don't have a job or don't go to school or anything. Before it was impossible because you couldn't really play the music live. I mean my first tour was all Whitehouse covers for the most part and three drum machines, and it wasn't that good. It was just me screaming the whole time. When I was actually able to

play songs and do what I wanted with live computers and stuff, you could do it on the road too, it was like having your studio with you and that changed everything. Then this music could tour. When I was young and there'd be an electronic show it would always suck, I would never go out. It would just be a bunch of people messing around with tape recorders. It isn't so much of an introverted computer musical kind of thing anymore. I know people who make minimal Techno, who want to be rock stars and play in front of five million people at festivals. You can do anything you want. I think it would be hilarious if they did, but it's now reaching a point where the music has to meet the medium. I mean in America you can still get it in places like Portland or Seattle where it's like, 'Artist Makes Music With Computers'. You don't have to be big or anything, just the fact that you use a Powerbook or whatever is enough to sell an editor on doing it. I'd like to get past that point. If you can get attention just for using a computer, that means anyone else could too. I want to pass the whole novelty phase. After a show people come up to you and are asking you about what you did, and about the process and are like, 'Wow that was so new and exciting', rather than what it actually was, it's like, 'Take your heads out of my music.' At the same time, I don't want to make music that people just dance to. I want to make music that makes people think a lot, but not about that stuff. If you're a car engineer, what kind of sprocket wrench you use matters, but it would be pretty weird if everyone who got their car fixed came in and asked you, 'What kind of sprocket wrench are you using?'"

Of course, the Kid's vision isn't every electronic music fan's idea of utopia. However, the alternative certainly isn't any brighter, particularly the way the Kid sees it. "A lot of electronic music is just trying to learn the equipment," he explains. "I think a lot of the demos we get are people who haven't made a good record because they haven't figured out how to use their gear. In this world of instant gratification and people thinking things can happen so quickly, it's like bands like The Clash learned everything they needed to in the first two months of being a band. After that, they were just playing with it. Electronic music means that you're just an endless student, and it takes forever to learn various things, and the music for the most part is gonna suck across the board. They're so many things to get into and so many things to get involved in, that you can never streamline to actually perfecting something. If you don't have a really clear vision you can't just know what to get. Most people have to play around with the guitar before they figure out what they want their sound to sound like. The fact that there's no mixing down, you don't have to go into the studio, you don't have to collaborate anyone, just like burn a CD, boom, boom, boom—you don't even have to collect the sounds anymore, sadly—it shows that electronic music, for as long as I can see, is always going to be a second class music, something that people are always gonna throw away. 'Oh yeah, I know someone who makes electronic music' or like 'Is it music? Or is it electronic music?' It'll always be this thing for people who don't know what to do. That's why there's so many people who don't know really what they're doing. I mean, people like me and Cex. I would even accuse Phoebea of having an identity crisis, even Autechre....

"The more the secrets of abstraction get taken away, the more it gets made and the less it is to be abstract, and that's why I think experimental labels have crises," he concludes. "It just sucks to have electronic music be something that is so easily ignorable." □ Kid606 appears on 13 October with Anti-Pop Consortium as part of The Wire's Underground Persistence event at Montreal FCMF Festival, Canada; and in November takes part in the What Do You Want To Do With It? digital arts festival at London's ACA. Tigerbeatz Website: www.tigerbeatz.com

The Primer

The Wire's bimonthly guide to the essential recordings of a selected artist or genre. This month: Sasha Frere-Jones leads initiates into the 36 chambers of HipHop arcana with The Wu-Tang Clan. Illustration: Savage Pencil

A nine-man HipHop group in the decade of the solo star, black to the back but too weird for most urban radio playlists, The Wu-Tang Clan earn that most thesaurus of cultural assessments, "real" – if that means "internal contradictions not disguised". Everybody in the pop culture universe namechecks The Wu, yet no Wu album has sold more than two million records. Wu members have worked with Björk, Mariah Carey and Shakille O'Neal, but the group remain permanently below the celebrity wilderness. There is a Wu-Tang video game and a clothing line called Wu Wear, but I've yet to encounter anyone using either. Since their beginnings in 1991, producer and leader RZA has fashioned a sound full of noise and longing that still holds sway over some underground MCs – the post-Company Flow DJ condition, for example, are inconceivable without it – but there's no evidence on the charts or radio right now that The Wu-Tang really are still "the most influential rap group", as The Daily Telegraph (no less) called them in 1997. Has their day come and gone?

If folks buying records at chain stores have moved on, it is likely because The Wu don't really work as pop music – Method Man aside, perhaps. Part of loving The Wu is having your expectations deflated. The Wu don't give immediate thrills, don't out to the chase (if they even know what road they're on), don't know when to stop, don't know how to make their strengths read to a larger audience, don't engage the world beyond the inside of their minds. But then, keeping your own counsel could be an operational definition of "artist", and The Wu are, above all, listening only to themselves, and to their thousands and thousands of insular, hilarious, gnomic, crackling words.

You could also be forgiven for thinking The Wu aren't thoroughly HipHop, at least as most people practise it. They share few imperatives with HipHop's Old School programme (provide funk, talk charming shit in unison, discuss trousers) or its New School business plan (provide semi-funk, talk ugly philosophy alone, discuss watches). What The Wu generally do is stand on the corner and talk over generally unchanging backdrops. You could be forgiven for calling it the blues, in particular the dark-soaked 1950s singer Robert Pete Williams who, over simple songs and repetitive verses loaded with trappings, liked to moon about love gone bad, then tell you what he had for lunch. Both Williams and The Wu use music only as background, letting musical phrases repeat infinitely so the voice can come to the fore. Thing is, many RZA tracks are loops that sound like they were programmed and recorded in the time it took to roll the tape. Spiritual/quotidian, boring/synoptic – the dialectic is constant in Wu texts. Or Wu people. Prolix, theoretical and goofy, the Wu are street heroes with apparently bulletproof street cred. Party ambassadors who pray to the Mecca of weed, The Wu are proudly moralists who scold other rappers. Poets disguised as hoodlums, suu genres innovators cloaked as generic soldiers, The Wu know

that frustration is just a prelude to pleasure. Call for a metaphysician, and they'll send a bricklayer. Introduce yourself to unknowable superhero gangster Tony Starks and he'll tell you how poor his health is. Ominous them as tough guys and they'll cry out for Mama. Lead them for common sense and they'll reward you with dunderheaded bile (take your pick). Reach for language and you come back with silly noise. Are you enjoying yourself? Are Wu-Tang the essence of HipHop? The last great rock group? (Mixed interviews, four bowls and jell time say it is decidedly so.) You can study Wu-Tang forever and never reach understanding. One-lake improvisers in the studio, The Wu are brutal logicians in the conference room. They've spun a web of label deals around the individual members that enables The Wu to carpet bomb retailers with constant product. Capodannone is not an "official" Wu-Tang member, yet he's on two of the three Wu-Tang albums and has put out two RZA-supervised solo albums of his own. Master Killa, an "official" Wu-Tang member, is only intermittently present on the Wu-Tang albums and has yet to put out so much as a 12" under his own name. Market The Wu? Find the dragon's tail first, silly mortal. Frustrated listeners and hungry fans can visit www.ohhhla.com for transcriptions of lyrics. The transcriptions are sent in by fans, so errors abound, but many mysteries will be solved.

THE GENIUS WORDS FROM THE GENIUS

COLO CHILLIUM/REPRESSURE 20475 CD 1991

PRINCE RAKEEM (RZA)

"OOH, I LOVE YOU RAKEEM"

TOMMY BOY 78666 12" 1991

Start with the dragon's head. In 1991, The Genius, not yet known as The GZA, became the first Wu to reach market. Produced largely by Easy Mo Bee, Words From The Genius is a piece with most of the Cold Chillin' label's B0s catalogue, presenting The Genius as a late period Big Daddy Kane over party beats. ("The Genius is slamm'n" Yo, the Genius is slamm'n!") Before the laser blinks out, we've heard "Come On Mo", "What Are Silly Girls Made Of" and "Stay Out Of Bars", and learned what Genius thinks about perfidious females. Subgenies.

Words probably won't surprise you as much as "Ooh, I Love You Rakeem", the RZA's 1991 debut single on Tommy Boy as Prince Rakeem. Rakeem was a jovial, randy sort, a bargain-basement version of Digital Underground's Humpty Hump. The perky beat stays in line with the De La Soul sound (then paying the bills at Tommy Boy) while Rakeem trades bomb mots with a female chorus: "I kiss the bosoms but never eat the daisies", "Ooh, we love you Rakeem!", "The feeling's mutual, ladies". The B-side, "Deadly Venoms", doesn't live up to its promising title, but "Sexcapades" does come with a Wu-tang mix, marking the first appearance of the crew's name. Does it sound like The Wu? Not particularly. Rakeem replaces

Easy Mo Bee's beat with a heavier drum loop and an Albert King guitar squeal, making it sound like the work of Cypress Hill producer DJ Muggs. ("Ooh, I Love You Rakeem" is now available on the compilation *Tommy Boy Essentials: HipHop Vol 1*.)

WU-TANG CLAN

"PROTECT YA NECK"

WU TANG RECORDS 12" 1992

Now proceed down to the neck. Like The Modern Lovers' "Roadrunner", "Protect Ya Neck" is both a neo rumpus and a perfect circle, missing nothing, charging ever forward, about nothing. Over a RZA beat that doesn't mind moving, each MC delivers a précis of a career to come. (The Genius begins a career-long habit of critiquing the music industry: "Who's your A&R? A mountain climber who plays an electric guitar.") With the raw beat clumping along and the MCs scrambling over each other like pups to the test, "Protect Ya Neck" felt sloppy or hazy in a way that HipHop rarely had before, despite adopting calling this a "return to roots". These guys were on some punk rock shit and it made them, for a moment, new.

WU-TANG CLAN

ENTER THE WU-TANG (36 CHAMBERS)

UNDISCIPLED 05336 CD 1993

On The Wu's debut album, The RZA's still in a cloud of Cypress Hill smoke. The fuzzy thump beats are straight out of the "Tripp" and "It's A New Day" crate. RZA's melodic moves are more unexpected, though, and soon enough they will become his private property: minor key piano clumps, quivering strings, random clicks and cracks, samples from the Stax and Hi Records catalogues and dialogue from Hong Kong kung fu movies. (Let the record show, however, that J Saur Kane was the first to combine HipHop beats and kung fu dialogue, on 1989's "Oopth Chang" single.) The RZA would figure out the mixing deal later and all the MCs would get deeper within the year, but Enter still sounds like the product of one long night in front of the mic, 20 odd years of dreams and sketches tumbling out. Jump-up tracks like "Method Man" and "Wu Tang Clan Ain't Nothing To Fuck Wit" gave UK Junglists a lifetime of soundbites to love the album, atypically, a mover, but the heart of RZA's project is in moments like "Can It All Be So Simple" and "CREAM". RZA was building a new house for HipHop, a place to mourn and think and wander. If anyone happens to dance or have fun along the way, bully for them. Funk was never really part of the plan. The MCs would handle that as they saw fit.

METHOD MAN

TICAL

DEF JAM 31452830 CD 1994

In 1999, Method Man disavowed Tical as "the weakest solo album", but I couldn't disagree more. Recorded



after a basement flood destroyed much of RZA's equipment and records, Tical is compact but fried. The RZA flattens his drum patterns and soaks his samples in formaldehyde (or maybe that's just eight-bit sampling). There's a reason Method Man is the closest The Wu have to a star, and it's not just his lantern jaw and bedroom eyes; he's the understandable one. He raps but never barks, rhymes directly but stops for scenic views, and generally acts stoned but steady. Meth is also the most female-positive member of The Clan (though that's always going to be a relative term), responsible for one of the few great HipHop love songs, the unsentimental but sweetly specific "All I Need": "I'm a walk these dogs so we can live in a fat ass crib, with thousands of kids/Word life, you don't need a ring to be my wife/Just be there for me and I'm gonna make sure we be/Living in the fucking lap of luxury." (The better known, and better, version of this song is the remix by none other than Sean "Puffy" Combs. Mary J Blige sings "You're all I need to get by," only quoted on keyboard in the original, and the added layer of sugar makes the longing that much harder to shake off.) "Sub Crazy" features what sounds like a shark grinding its jaws in an echo chamber and these classic words: "Eeep bow in top, aish, here we go, star."

OU' DIRTY BASTARD RETURN TO THE 36 CHAMBERS: THE DIRTY VERSION

ELECTRA 01659 CD 1999

Playing his offstage self—Russell Jones—D' Dirty introduces himself as a "cool guy" from "Phlo," promising "something that nobody in the history of rap ever said themselves to do." As D' Dirty, he continues, soberly: "It is a special night, because I'm happy to be living, you know. A nigga needs to shoot me down and shit. I don't know it just feels good to be here." Then the tears start to flow and D' Dirty is off on a rant about gonorrhea which includes a quote from "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," among other things. Truth, lies, schtick, suffering, gunplay, sociology, showbusiness, schizophrenia—the next five years of D' Dirty's life are all in this intro.

Somewhere, at this point, must have been greenlighting all Wu madness in hope of big numbers, because Return To The 36 Chambers is as unsurpassed as a gold album gets. "Don't U Know" is an updated Blowy tale that ends with the couplet "Easy on my balls/They're fragile as eggs," and, on "Raw Hide," O' Dirty says he's "26 years old, still on welfare." "Shimmy Shimmy Yo" is a party tune from a much better place, where D' Dirty is "off on a natural change, bon voyage," and the sounds all dance, even if nobody's told them why. "Gon' Down" begins with D' Dirty making mock noises, unaccompanied, which triggers his "opera" software and sends us all on another natural charge. Whether O' Dirty is Tomming for Elektra or saying "Isac for the gods depends on which bity you read as jokes. Either way, he's deeply entertaining: an unrelieved id on expenses, an expert in

faecal play. He would play the Fool in The Wu drama, except he's got no wisdom except that people will do a crazy black man a lot of rope if he's only renting or, better yet, sharecropping for Elektra.

GENIUS/GZA LIQUID SWORDS GETFEN GET 034815 CD 1995

When people say Genius is the most literate of The Wu, I think they mean that he's happy to let the beat sit over yonder unbothered. That seems like making things hard on yourself when you're making a HipHop album but, hey, it's science, gods. Genius trades "romance" for "crime" on Liquid Swords and his icy skills certainly work better with darker scenarios, but Genius has none of Ghostface Killah's emotional immediacy or D' Dirty's yuks or Method Man's chops to make it all stick. But then there's RZA's production: Liquid Swords continues his hitting streak. Now the Lee Perry parallels start making sense. Both work quick and dirty with a common band of collaborators; both let the machines speak and cherish mistakes. Can it all be so simple? (Beware: This is the most confusingly indexed CD in history. Not even the coded IDs are correct—"Swordsmen" and "Gold" are mixed up, if you believe the titles as they read on computers and the words you hear the MCs saying.)

RAEKWON THE CHEF ONLY BUILT 4 CUBAN LINX...

LOUDMICA 0795088563 CD 1996

Imagine trying to read very small type on the inside of a cigarette wrapper while standing under a streetlamp in a slow drizzle. That's Cuban Linx..., irreducibly New York, smeared and self-referential, like a neighbourhood that feels familiar but isn't. A stylistic descendant of Kool G Rap and his Isky bluster, Raekwon chops sentences down to a few words and strings the bits together to make verbal links that take days to decipher. The words are hot and chewy where RZA's music is brittle and hard: "Stand on the block/Beep gun cooks/Avananche rock get paid off...strive for whys/Mad lodged in lies/Max sell and enjoy the highs" (from "Glaciers Of Ice"). "Verbal Intercourse" captures a perfect Wu pitch motif. The RZA's best gobs like an artificial Yule log, a perfect example of what RZA himself called that "old RZA crookedness." Guest star Nas donates an onigami verse while Raekwon and Ghostface drop crystals of meaning that sparkle even when you can't make them out. It's ornate! It's abstract! It is, possibly, about something! "You came in looking faveur/Ki," RZA tells Ghost at one point. An album of sense and sensibility, and the John Woo samples don't hurt either.

GHOSTFACE KILLAH IRONMAN

RAKOR 0644955PC 87858T 8487729 CD 1996

Raekwon and Ghost reunite quickly for Ghost's debut and raise the slang bar quickly, analogizing various mysterious practices to various foods. "Wid'flow" is

Ghostface's response to an unfaithful girlfriend and though he seems to be in genuine pain about it, you'll rue the day you had to hear about it. "260" is more like it, RZA staying close to his strengths with a plangent Hi Records horn loop while Ghostface provides one of his best everyday life postcards: "Peasos Keana, what's up with your girlfriend Wanda?/She drive a green Honda, with legs like Jane Fonda?/Just left her, she took Rashean to Rathmark then jettied to Canal to get her man some Clarks/She said 'Be back in 90 minutes, Ghostface, God forbid'/She say 'Peace to W, who's watchin the kids?'" Dn "Camay," Ghost and Cappadonna restrict themselves to courtship, probably a first in HipHop. Ghostface ends the song with a line many wish they had a chance to say: "Here, take my number, let me pull the chair from under/I had fun, plus your backyard speak with thunder." And that's as nasty as it gets. Unstoppable—who knew? Is "Daytona 500" unstoppable? Yes. Does Bob James's "Nautius" seem inexhaustible as a sampling source? Yes. Does this make you wish the RZA would, you know, pep it up more often? Yes. But we know that RZA just wants to let "em cry and that's where the tearjerking masterpiece/spectre "All I've Got For You" comes in. Method sang to his woman, but Ghost is looking out for Mama. At first, the track sounds as hinky and spontaneous as the grand piano on the street corner locks in the video, but Ghostface makes every word work: "Check it, 15 of us in a three-bedroom apartment/Roaches everywhere, cousins and aunts was there/For in the bed, two at the foot, two at the head/I didn't like to sleep with Jon-Jon—he peed the bed/Seven o'clock, pluckin' roaches out the cereal box/Some shared the same spoon, watchin' Saturday cartoons/Sugar water was our thing, every meal was no thn/Ix the summer, free lunch held us down like steel/And there was days I had to go to tek's house with a note/Waiting 'Gloria, can I borrow some food? I'm dead broke." And if that's too obvious for formalists, they can enjoy hearing "shish kebab" and "dashiki" near each other in the same sentences.

WU-TANG CLAN WU-TANG FOREVER

LOUDMICA 026384505 2340 CD 1997

Beware looking up albums called Forever that answer an imagined question with wishful thinking. RZA and his B-team producers go straight for the bin with off-the-rack keyboards and drum machines on this endless double CD affair. The tracks are slow as ever, but dragging instead of deadfied. Shame, because the MCs are in strong form. Method Man delivers one of my favourite rhymes ever here: "We at odds until we even." On "The Projects," Raekwon continues to expand his foot-based thesaurus ("light up the broccoli, put the refresh in my back pocket") and "A Better Tomorrow" finds GZA worrying about his family convincingly, but listeners without a programmable CD player should proceed with caution. Putatively addressing somebody else, Genius delivers

WU' DIPTV PHOTREC



a perfect capsule review on "As High As Wu Tang Get": "Too many songs, weak rhymes that's mad long/Made it brief, son - half short and twice strong." The era of RZA-produced albums is officially over. From here on in, the brunt of Wu-Tang production work falls to associates and disciples. (Perversely, this is the biggest selling album in the Wuveve.)

METHOD MAN TICAL 2000: JUDGEMENT DAY

DEF JAM 31456920 CD 1998

Method Man had found his voice as a party rhymers with apocalyptic tendencies and his appropriate beats in True Master's mossy, chunky funk. "Dangerous Grounds" is likely to make even the doubters wiggle and the RZA-produced "Suspect Chin Music" and "Retro Godfather" are both evidence that everybody returns to their strengths, given time. Method Man's own production on "Judgement Day" is refreshingly fast, and his ongoing friendship with D'Angelo means some of the incidental singing is, for once, on a par with the rhymes. Program this one right and you should have few problems, as long as you avoid new Wu MC Streetlife and the uniformly unfunny skits.

RZA AS BOBBY DIGITAL BOBBY DIGITAL IN LIQUID

GEE STREET/V3 6358133521 CD 1998

When this album came out, some critics suggested that RZA doesn't even qualify as an MC. I happen to like his spit-blocked enunciation and overstuffed verses - check the first verse of "B0BBY" to see how much fun concatenation can be - and I loved the way he used to make the last syllable of every line rise in pitch then fade away in a strangle. But taken in large doses, his lack of charm and taste for near clinical sexual fantasias is, at best, distancing. (If you want to hear about his "apple head" spitting "cider" you're in luck, but avoid "Domestic Violence" at all costs.) And, unlike even the crime-positive Clan MCs like Raekwon, RZA is fond of the kind of general threats other lesser rappers deal out. The detriments will find worth in the tunes featuring other Wu members: "NYC Everything", with Method Man and "Bobby Did It", with Ghostface.

Soon after the release of this album, RZA told the New York Times that he "took the last two years going through books to learn how to play music." He even opens the album by criticizing other producers: "Ultimate breadbeats and shit, right? Niggas still making money off those shits, 'nigga' the same shits for a thousand year." Well, it worked pretty well for you on the first Wu-Tang album, pal, and nobody wants any more 'original' keyboard and drum tracks like these. Hell, his main vocal tic - "Doo doo doo doo" - is his imitation of the string sound from "Tical". Even RZA can't get over his early work. Unless you want your kick drums on the one and three, your snare on the two and the four and no variation thereafter until the end of time, you will likely not elect RZA to the Drum Programming Hall of Fame.

GENIUS/GZA BENEATH THE SURFACE

MCA MCADE11660 CD 1998

The producers here (mostly Mathematics and Arabian Knight) don't necessarily have the RZA's taste for the illogical but the variety works, especially as there aren't many barnstormers. There is, however, "Crash Your Crew". Di' Dirty Bastard screams the chorus like he's flagging down a rescue plane while John The Baptist's beat surges like the mixing board's done a *Fantasia* and come to life. "Hip Hop Fury" is one of The Wu's better low-profile tracks: RZA runs his testosterone against an uncharacteristically fragile track by producer Arabian Knight, bellowing the hook: "You crunchy chumps get crumped up like crack rocks/Fuck with The Wu, we busting your whole snootbox!" So there! (Consumer alert: This track is also on Wu Chronicles II.) "1112" features some stellar GZA verbiage: "Bobby said 'Fuck spending 50 on a whip/Buy equip/Mental flip/Got a thousand tracks stored on a chip/He said he had med toys to make noise/He splits and separates drums like asteroids.'" I also appreciate the anti-gun, anti-corporate public service announcements scattered through the album, which feel more surprising than the average "man on the street" Wu skit. Unexpected move: "Publicity", a sequel to Liquid Swords's anti-industry rant "Labels", with magazine names substituted for label names. Definitely the only Wu-Tang song to mention Creative Loafing and the Village Voice.

DI' DIRTY BASTARD NIGGA PLEASE

ELEKTRA 62414 CD 1999

Di' Dirty's life after *Return To The 36 Chambers* was eventful. Mr. Jones renamed himself Oskrus in 1998 but soon thereafter switched to Big Baby Jesus, for obvious reasons. Already a victim of a shooting in 1995, in 1998 Di' Dirty was shot in the back at his own Brooklyn apartment during an unsuccessful robbery attempt. Later that year he was charged with shoplifting and thrown out of a Berlin hotel for hanging naked from his balcony. In January of 1999, Di' Dirty was charged with attempted murder, weapons possession and assault. (He was later found not guilty on all charges.) In March of 1999, Di' Dirty was stopped by police after going through a red light and charged with possession of 20 vials of crack and a bag of marijuana. What a good time to release an album. The mood here is desperate, as Di' Dirty breaks down in front of the mic. "I Can't Wait" channels Di' Dirty's mania into a remarkable train of a song and some of the Neptune-produced tracks still work as comedy, but Di' Dirty is mostly writing on the spot, threatening everyone whose name he can remember and dishing out repulsive sex talk. "You white motherfuckers can't ever take over," he says promisingly on "Rollin' Wit You", before asking someone for beer. Babylon, sadly, doesn't take many more direct hits on *Nigga Please*. Di' Dirty's newspaper headlines started acting as his real videos.



THE FIVE





THE WU-TANG CLANMEN

while the video for "Got Your Money" contained only chopped up blaxploitation clips and excerpts from the "Shimmy Shimmy Ya" video.

GHOSTFACE KILLAH SUPREME CLENTELE

EPIC/RAZOR SHARP CD83935 CD 2000

Defeating conventional wisdom about the career arc of artists, Ghostface increased his horsepower, swing and language while on hiatus and delivers one of the strongest solo MC albums of all time. His words are a microwave melt of John Ashbery-style poetry, shopping lists and loebing Slim: "Hit Poughkeepsie, crispy chicken verbs throw up a stone richie/Chop the O, sprinkle a lil' snow inside a Optimo/Swing the John McEnroe, rap, rock 'n' roll/Tidy Bowl, gungho pro, Stansky with the guns/ole." You'll have to sprint to keep pace with the alternation of prosaic and space-age ideas here. Oprah, 5D cent sodas, Van Halen — it's all in here.

Ghost's voice is loud enough to make amplification superfluous and his cadences are full of dips and sing-song phrasing. He could have rhymed over Mike and The Mechanics and come away in the plus column. Luckily, he did not. Edited and arranged by RZA and Ghost, the sampled beats from Mathematics and lesser known producers like Hassan and Black Moses-Art are a welcome break from RZA's sub-Neptune keyboard doodles. If one song can be isolated from the sensal mayhem it might be the Hassan production "Apollo Kids", which pivots on a heraldic horn blast from a Solomon Burke tune. The video for this song renders the illogical rush of this song pretty well. Ghost eats an ice cream cone, wears a fur coat and manages his own Wallabee shoe factory.

THE RZA MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI

VICTOR JAPAN VJCP20644 CD 1999

GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI: THE ALBUM

EPIC/RAZOR SHARP CD83794 CD 2000

To create the music for Jim Jarmusch's samurai gangster movie, RZA returned to the Stax and Hi vaults, summoning the Wu sound of the golden 1959-96 period. Insiders and fans will point you to the expensive Victor Japan version, which features all the instrumentals used in the film (most of which do not appear on the American Sony version) and only four rhymes. The tracks (mostly just loops) wander, and have a lighter feel than other Wu projects. "Untitled #12 (Free Jazz)" sounds like a conference call among Monk, The Upthorn Horns and The RZA, and it may well be. The sound is vivid and loud, as though RZA has jacked his sampler directly into the mastering deck. "Fast Shadow" is a Wu gem, small but perverse, with "O' Dirty" only strong verse of the 21st century. "RZA #7" actually has some bounce to it (though the loops fall out of time) and "RZA's Theme" has that 'blind man making a salad' feel that classic Wu puzzlers

used to have. Despite some longeurs in the back half, the hisseking American version is equal to its instrumental counterpart. The addition of rhyming — "Funky Theme" the instrumental becomes "Strange Eyes" the rhyme — adds some force and several tracks rank with The Wu's best: the Old School funk duet between Kool G Rap and The RZA, "Cakes," and the sibilant, near static incantation "Don't Test/Wu Station" by dancehall crooner Suga Bang Bang.

WU-TANG CLAN THE WU

LOUD CD82189 CD 2000

If you want proof that The Wu are a living contradiction, here it is. After being absent as producer from some of The Wu's best work, and about to record one of the weakest Wu records yet under his own name, The RZA comes through here with possibly his most consistent productions yet. The W is a ferocious return to form for everybody involved. "Careful" and "Click Click" are muddiest in the tradition of Tidal, and "Protect Ya Neck (The Jump Off)" is good enough to earn its title. The standout tracks are some of the highest points in Wu history. "Hollow Bones" is simply staggering. Over nothing more than a loop from Syle Johnson's funk classic "Is It Because I'm Black?", Ghostface and Raekwon percolate and strafe a crime narrative with enough swing to fuel an entire album. "I Can't Go To Sleep" features fake crying, Isaac Hayes and plausible apocalypse scenarios, while the icy "Jah World" is The RZA's lament come full circle: a funeral march. The combination of Memphis soul shout and Kingston soul cry first heard on Ghost Dog comes to full bloom here. (The only weak track is "Conditioner", a phoned in duet between Di'Party and Snop, who both do as little as possible.) Soulful, snoot and fierce, The W will hopefully earn its rightful place over time.

VARIOUS WU-TANG RECORDS PRESENTS: WU-CHRONICLES

WU-TANG CD201143 CD 1999

WU-CHRONICLES CHAPTER II

WU-TANG/IMPURITY CD24481 CD 2001

Though obviously marketing loans aimed to keep Wu on the shelf while exploiting some catalogue, these two low profile comps actually do a consumer friendly job of collecting worthy rare tracks and extracting good tracks from not so good solo LPs. The first volume is the strongest, with the Notorious B.I.G./Method Man duet "The What", RZA's excellent soundtrack appearance, "Tragedy" (also the best Wu video to date, with full flying tiger kung fu effects), and "Hip Hop Drunkies", an O' Dirty/Alkaholiks duet that finds everybody at their vaudevillian best. The remaining tracks by Wu affiliates make for acceptable filler. Volume II is variable ("Rumble", a U-God track that could be Company Flow in a pinch, and Di Spooky's "Catechism", a felicitous moment for the otherwise lousy Killah Priest. Both volumes prove that any track can be improved by a Method Man cameo.

RZA AS BOBBY DIGITAL DIGITAL BULLET

RYE THE PARTISAN CD08182 CD 2001

Bobby! We thought we knew you, RZA still has not received a chem infusion and his combo platter of Five Percent philosophy, greasy misogyny and gun fantasies is still a bad lunch. "Black Widow Pt 2" manages to capture O' Dirty at some point in his fugitive phase, but it's a sad, slack affair. The only bumping track is a Dirty South emulator produced by Tony Touch but unfortunately it's "Domestic Violence, Part 2", which RZA describes in his press kit as a "response" to the first version on Bobby Digital in Stereo. What, he didn't get enough airtime? RZA claims here that he's "sold 20 million records." If we trust a Babylonian source like Soundscan and add up every single Wu-related release, then we get close. But in fact, none of Bobby's has even gone gold and Digital Bullet is unlikely to change that, unless the vigorous TV and radio push behind the competent single "La Rumba" continues. Ah, the romance between label and recently-signed artist.

The current state of The Wu is fluid, at best. After impressing authorities by appearing on stage with The Wu in October of 2000 while on the lam from rehab, Di' Dirty pleaded guilty in April 2001 to criminal possession of crack and marijuanas and was sentenced in July to two to four years in state prison. Soon after his sentencing, which was delayed by a court-ordered psychiatric examination, RZA posted a bulletin called "Dirty In Danger" on www.wu-tang.clan: "O' Dirty Bastard fears his life is in jeopardy and that a conspiracy is in effect to kill him. These concerns have been presented to the DA and prison officials have been presented to the threat to his life... If something happens while Di' Dirty is in the custody of these officials, his family, his 13 children, and The Wu-Tang will seek full retribution in a civil resolution." A September article in the Village Voice quotes The RZA as saying O' Dirty is "scared", while RZA's assistant Tam Layson describes Di' Dirty as "lethargic" because of various medications. In August, the Wu-Tang Records offices in Greenwich Village closed suddenly while, unrelatedly, the Wu Website posted a message that Cappadonna had gone AWOL from The Wu. RZA has promised another Wu-Tang Clan album before the end of 2001, but Method Man has stated publicly that the Wu family needs to get its affairs in order before that happens. In turn, U-God has gone on record saying that Method Man is "always on the fucking road, so he doesn't know what the fuck is going on". Ghostface's R&B-styled new single "Never Be The Same Again" has just started creeping onto the radio. As we go to press, www.wu-tang.com is inoperative. □ O' Dirty Bastard's Free Dirty, a collection of previously released material is out now on Elektra. Ghostface Killah's Bulletproof Wallets (Razor Sharp/Epix) will be released in November. Raekwon's RAGU (Rae And Ghost United) is due out in winter 2002.

U-600

GHOSTFACE KILLAH



Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Detail from Christian Bünzow's design for Palace Royal, Harrogate, 1869. (Royal Academy of Arts, London)

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Joe O'Brien
New Sound For Old Blues (Infused)
The Other People Place
Lament Of The Lame-Case (Ward)
Warlike
Fingered Scylla (Chillape)
Alex Gordon
Small Craft Warnings (New Classics)
Fennema
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Alex Kuyler
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Barrenness (P Commemoration)
Baku Saverio
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This month's selected CDs, albums and singles

JOHN COLTRANE THE OLATUNJI CONCERT: THE LAST LIVE RECORDING IMPULSE! 01140 CD

On 23 April 1967, three months before his death from liver cancer, John Coltrane performed at the Olatunji Center for African Culture in New York City. With him were drummer Rashied Ali and bassist Jimmy Garrison, Alice Coltrane on piano and Pharoah Sanders on tenor saxophone. Algie DeWitt added a Yoruba instrument called the bata drum and, it is speculated now, Jumma Santos may also have contributed percussion. It wasn't Coltrane's final concert; he played Baltimore early in May, but it was the last one to be captured on tape. Besides the end, it would have been understandable if he had grown introspective and guarded, but here Coltrane and his friends are still looking straight ahead, and the music is incandescent. Bernard Drivon, who acted as engineer, has supplied the tapes. They're not as clean as hi-fi heads might like them but that just heightens the intensity of the music's purging tide. Billy Taylor has scarcely introduced Coltrane as one of the most remarkable forces in jazz, when the floodgate opens, and thereafter, for an hour, music drenched with pain – yet filled with joy – pours into the room. That's not reviewer's rhetoric. In a series of landmark concerts and recordings, Coltrane had established himself as the most articulate musical register of the turbulence shaking American society during the mid-1960s. Faced with personal disaster, the emotional charge of his saxophone playing tapped still deeper reserves. And in the face of death, Coltrane remained not simply defiant – he was positively aspirational.

For the last ten years of his life Coltrane engaged in a quest for spiritual growth. His musical identity expanded. He broke through the strictures of tonality and moved well beyond strategic use of dissonance to

reach an inclusiveness that symbolised in sound the universal embrace he craved. In 1965 this took form in the volcanic mass of *Ascension*, an imposing musical statement of rare concentration and power. In the same year, Coltrane's outward journey also took the form of pilgrimage in sound to India as well as further towards African sources, the mysticism of OM, and the rhythmic adventure of *Kulu Se Mama*. His legendary dedication to practice, rigorously and tirelessly probing tenor and soprano for new expressive means, was not the navel-gazing obsessiveness of a technician.

Coltrane finessed technique towards the goal of transcending the physical limitations of his instruments. His mastery of his horns served his desire to make them channels for a universal music. Hence the unparalleled extent of his influence on everyone from The Byrds to John McLaughlin, Tim Buckley to Charles Gayle, La Monte Young to Evan Parker, to name just a few.

Energy, speed and duration were Coltrane's accomplices in surpassing all expectations of what the saxophone might achieve. With his own body in extremity, facing imminent dissolution, the impulse towards transcendence in his music assumed unprecedented urgency. *The Olatunji Concert* comprises two half-hour pieces, "Ogunde", which he had recorded in a quartet version the month before, and "My Favorite Things", the Rodgers & Hammerstein tune which had become in his hands, in October 1960, a springboard for one of the great events in jazz history. Coltrane was never content to simply rehash a familiar package or a past triumph. Here more than ever, the melodic lines he handles with such feverish imagination are primed to splinter and disintegrate into the torrent. The theme to "My Favorite Things" appears especially precarious, an illusory form, a provisional configuration projected upon the surface of the absolute.

The Olatunji Center was opened in Harlem in 1965 by Babatundé Olatunji, an eminent drummer born in Nigeria. Rashied Ali seems to be breathing air that burns with rhythmic complexity. On 22 February 1967 he had shared a creative peak with Coltrane, making the magnificent duet album *Interstellar Space*. Two months later, Ali again shows himself to be the ideal percussionist to accompany Coltrane on his journey away from fixed determinants and across limits. Sanders too is the perfect partner, his rasping, shrieking tenor adding rugged contrast to Coltrane's fiery refinement, while retaining a secret subtlety within his roughness. Alice Coltrane effectively overcomes the suspicion that piano has become an item in the inventory of the music's memory, superfluous to her husband's requirements. The instrument now bolsters density rather than steering the show; it's used for attaining critical mass rather than as an anchor or safety net. The additional percussion serves the same end. Which leaves Jimmy Garrison, the bassist whose special role in Coltrane's mature musical life is acknowledged with a lengthy solo at the start of the epic voyage beyond "My Favorite Things". It's apt recognition of his strength and dedication as the sturdy launching pad for some of the most incendiary and vitalising sounds ever produced in music, the rock around which the cleansing fire ritual was repeatedly staged.

Coltrane aficionados have awaited this moment for many years. An invaluable historical document has at last been retrieved. But as well as being an important addition to the archive, this is pure inspiration, elemental music that veers towards delirium and generates a huge sensation of release. It's John Coltrane and his loyal friends riding the rapids into the ocean of sound. It's also a farewell, pervaded with sadness, fury and dismay, and a passionate affirmation of life, crying into the future. □

Dying of liver cancer inspired John Coltrane to drive the music harder in his quest for its universal embrace.

By Julian Cowley



NOËL AKCHOTE
SIMPLE JOSEPH
RECTANGLE RECORDS CD
BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Though still in his early thirties, Noël Akchote already has a highly impressive CV. The pianist guitarist has led both conventionally with Chet Baker and Eli Farkus, but in the 90s he started experimenting on projects ranging from Balkan funk to trashcore groups. Shirts with Henri Texier and Louis Sciole led to brilliant work with The Reggerys, where he has collaborated with heavyweights Evan Parker and Derek Bailey, and he also runs his own label, Rectangle.

Like its prehistoric forerunner Akchote's Simple Joseph is a solo work of intimacy and introspection. Whether a conscious nod to or its spiritual companion is Derek Bailey's String Theory. Read this as a huge compliment. The first three compositions build similar structures, with the fourth, an acoustic coda, reinforcing them by presenting their unlogged counterpart. Building mid-frequency oscillating hums into gentle howling drones of lo-fi ambience, he creates a quasi-industrial soundscape reminiscent of pulsing generators that build into a dynamo of Reichian minimalism. His warm amp valves (no solid state here) allow intricately controlled feedback to melt into the total fix. Cutting in and out of this collage are the odd twitches and glitches produced by electrical leakage and discharge, the show of a switch between pickups introducing interference in the circuit.

Far from inconsequential disturbances, these minutiae are momentary gifts of disruption to the patina of contemplation. A struck chord will echo fleetingly or a fingertip drumming on a string will be gently eased into the weave, to remind listeners of the guitar's presence. All these sounds are integral parts of the guitar/amp DNA, and are celebrated all the more for it.

The maturity of this work is evident in Akchote's surrender to the unravelling of the music on its own terms. It's as if he's out there in the ether and a million supply voltages e-treating guitar and amplifier as a closed loop. Akchote becomes its conduit, its creator and detached observer simultaneously.

OREN AMBARCHI
SUSPENSION
TOUCH 133 18 CD
BY WILL MONTGOMERY

The appropriately titled Suspension flies Australia based guitarist Oren Ambarchi even deeper into the twilight world of hesitation and heaving motion that he opened up in last year's *Insulation*. This is a more fully realised work than that strong disc — a definite step forwards. Or sideways. Ambarchi has developed a highly original guitar technique which preserves the instrument's six string warmth even as it owes much to contemporary electronics. Indeed, his music has affinities with both post-tech programming and post-noise improv. He might use loops, but his way of refusing to let them form stragglingly repetitive swathes underscores his evident lack of interest in strongly marked rhythms. The compositions move along in a fog of understatement, never settling into drones nor settling into a barrage of noise. And for all his

noisy avant-punk roots, his playing has become positively approachable — the title track trails rebobs of sound that are positively pretty. Further, he takes feedback overtones from more aggressive settings and re-presents them simply as sound. Evoking feelings of incompleteness, his new pieces formulate sequences of notes that seem to require resolution, only for the composer to withhold it. Notes hang in the air, while angular phrases are economically bopped. The softened attack of his notes makes for a mysterious, velvet-textured environment, in which the scenes he conjures up continually dissolve and re-form. This is intelligent, thoughtful, proactive ambience.

APHEX TWIN
DRUKOS
WARP WARP22 2XCD
BY ROB YOUNG

Not since 1994's *Selected Ambient Works* II has Richard D. James, aka Aphex Twin, ushered his legions of obsessive fans into such a cavernous cabinet of curiosities as *Drukos*. That earlier album remains the foundation on which much of his towering reputation still rests — a model of mid-90s electronic tundra, a veritable wilderness to lose yourself in, all verbal references removed; just segmented symbols in different colours left as signifiers to divide up the ghostly distillates of discrete tracks. This new collection is for more 'futures' 'electro', but with a chinking layer of self-conscious nonchalance that makes it as available as much of his (limited) output in recent times, with the exception of the ubiquitous 'Windowlicker'.

The sleeve is festooned with strange-angled shots of a piano's innards, emphasising the working parts of that well-timed instrument. And indeed, much of the soundtrack of *Drukos* is, on first encounter, one part Erik Satie-like naïf piano impromptu, two parts marvellous mechanical music machine. James's parts kit of sampled druck and tick over like the kind of antiquated Victorian organ you might expect to find whirring away in a scene from *Mr. Bean*. "Windowlicker" (that's you're going to have to get used to these titles — there are 30 of them) is typical: patchy metallic sonarities bawling loudly in lushly defined stereo around plangent synthesized interjections. "Zdriv" is one of the best moments of all: one and a half minutes of cloistered squeakybox whirring; another is "Ruglen Holon", a miniature for prepared piano.

But not enough of *Drukos* confidently breaks new ground, and too often James falls back on the old too familiar dysfunctional jitterbeat which has typified Aphex output since 1996's *Richard D. James album*. Although disc two's "54 Cymru Beets" and "Metaphase 6" compact everything James excels at in this mode — strutting goblets of Acid bassline, frenzied stridings digburps and subliminal sonic ties into a tongue-tied flickerflair — they're about as good as it gets. "Omigya-Switch" is a clumsy old heffupump of a track, treading its way through the jungle in the numbously rattlehike mode Aphex and his buddy Tom Jenkinson, aka Squarepusher, made so deftly their own. In fact, what sounds suspiciously like the voice of Jenkinson himself interrupts the equally bawling "Cook/Yor 10", phoning in a bawled "Come on you cunt, let's have some

Aphex Acid!" as it hinders towards a crescendo. Jenkinson's more recent trajectory into live improv collaboration has proved to be a more daring and interesting route than the electronic bedroom.

The majority of the remaining tracks are too much cake and no nuts. "Beydnorborn" is a mischievously widdle over a rehearsed electrifiable groove. "Lomacore" features the voices of his parents singing "Happy Birthday" to 28 year old Richard, going up and gone to the big city. It's neither touching, nor particularly funny or ironic: you get the feeling he erased it from the archive machine immediately after misreading it. Only in a few places does James point towards more seriously inventive territory. On "Gawerk 2", agitated human sounds lead into a dank, bubbling, oozed cavern of creaks and rumbles, as if Chris Moore had commissioned Bernard Parmegiani to soundtrack his next series of Björk.

Based on past admissions, true or not, there's the disconcerting feeling all the time you're listening to it that the selection on *Drukos* is just one combination out of many possible choices. It's not so much the parade of his achievements at the mouse over the past three years as a randomly selected clutch of the thousands of tracks, half formed experiments and half-out beatdowns James can fart out with one hand while the other is jostling his way through Ben Folds II. It has become his lot to exist in a permanent state of subliminal seque against the culture that would adopt him. That may make for amusing and amusing statements, but you have to be a very good comedian indeed to make your work more than a period piece. Not so much career development as career regression.

BODY PARTS
BODY PARTS
WANDERLUST 002 CD
BY BEN WATSON

Body Parts are Nick Dokovicky (electric guitar, vocals) and Gugu Chenover (drums, vocals). This album was recorded in March 2000 at the Centre Cultural André Malraux in Vandœuvre-lès-Nancy, north of a closing, 20 minute track named "Synth Impuls/Antaeus/The Round Nose Of Some Twenty Years/2 Languages Take Twice A Long", which was recorded live at Cuztellet rail station. The cover shows Dokovicky and Chenover smoking at a parade of naked female bottoms, and likewise the music was self-conscious about sonic urges: mind conforts matter in a starking question mark.

"Pet Song" is bubblegum with a Van Halen guitar solo. Magna reinterpreted as Japanese pop Metal. "Du Haut Du Mur" employs a backward riff, tiny drums and carpool transmitters. Dokovicky is adept at clearly articulated runs, all arpeggios, conkscores and bedspins. "The Corps" features deathcore punnelling, trendy rock riffs down the usual bellying tank. There's whinnery-for-flying scree mayhem, but Chenover's simplistic beats tick off Dokovicky's section writing, keeping everything clean and tidy.

"Bel'Inferno" is a spare chimescape, the "scaffolding" track which signals more detachment from the preceding compendium of teen rock excitements. Cuzco clocks, toy slobber

drums, dumb squeaks and vacant repetitions: sex is a stupid machine whose workings are observed with amusement. The clipped sound of poor preparation evokes a classical repression, a preference for transcendence mind over temporary matter.

"Yes 'Man Who Hated Pets" — traditional theme of adolescent hatred versus domesticity — is a liberally Dew-like in its attitude towards rock ideology, voicing both sides and summing. One senses a trace of expressive rest. "One Wooden Leg" is a surreal assault as disorienting, while "Bacchus! A Democracy", with its tension, release and bracketing of ideas, suggests the formal resolutions consented by the mighty. Kenny Process Metal, on "Queen Day", electric guitars become metal percussion, its relation to the drums — the rests, counting, precision — a kind of strenuous homosocial atavism. "Soft Lead" is more ambient ryo, lo-fi fence-line thumps, speckly Casio scales, sci-fi bowed guitar.

The closing rose tale at Cuztellet station is a logical extension of these sensuous squibs: such as the only means of reaching the public's patronage. For the sympathetic listener, though, it's an unsatisfying conclusion. Body Parts are alert to the idiocies of the norm, but if their music isn't going to remain merely mental (and/or contemplative), they'll need to let the non-conceptualised body matter of improvised rhythm take its way. Chenover would be advised to have some lessons from Ronald Shannon Jackson.

CHRIS BURN ENSEMBLE
THE PLACE 1991
EMANEK 4556 CD
BY BILL SHODMAKER

Recorded at a London festival called Cowards, whose mission was to "highlight the musical and creative links between jazz improvisation and the work of contemporary composers", *The Place* 1991 documents two noteworthy firsts for pioneer Chris Burn's Ensemble. Its particularly intriguing that Evan Parker was engaged as the concert's first guest soloist on Burn's "Blocks And Arches" as the ensemble's success at making persuasive collective statements has been partially due to the subordination of the extreme virtuosity Parker all but invented. His tenor saxophone thrags strong exchanges with John Butcher's soprano, flautist Jim Denley, guitarist John Russell and Burn, resulting in a more fervent music than the ensemble usually musters.

The other, less successful, debut is Keith Rowe's "Pollock #82", the ensemble's first composition by an outsider. With each musician working off individual graphic scores taken from Jackson Pollock's paintings, the occasionally wild performance nevertheless has a strained episodic feel compared to Butcher's "Southern Samba A Go-Go", which is propelled by synth player Matt Hutchinson's excited percussive samples, or Burn's "Potato Art Card", which is built around Steve Wishart's hardy-gurdy. Burn remarks in his sleeve notes about the compatibility of the loosely improvised "Harmer Har" with the ensemble's preconceived structures, which speaks to the specific qualities of their procedures and protocols. It is a delicate balance easily tipped, even by the likes of Parker and Rowe.



**THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
BOOTLEG SERIES VOLUME ONE: THE
QUINE TAPES**

UNIVERSAL, THREE DISCS, \$39.98

Preserved by time and failing memories, and pickled in mystique, a legend's potency is derived from the depth of its audience's need of it. With vested interests to protect, meanwhile, the keepers of the legend feed the myths around it to increase demand, even as they carefully limit its supply. But, by dint of its age, a legend is a fragile thing. Painfully aware that their capital can be very easily destroyed by a powerful dose of truth, its keepers tightly control just how much gets out and when.

Founded on four studio albums and a viciously debunked junky-fag reputation that placed them somewhere between Hubert Selby and the Marquis de Sade, the legend of The Velvet Underground is seemingly unassailable. The stature of those albums grows stronger with time, even as the relatively few witnesses of what really went down during their five-year spree of supposed debauchery grow fewer. But at least one of them has come forward to spill the beans: Robert Quine, former Richard Hell and Lou Reed guitarist and, more pertinently here, massive Velvet Underground fan. Further, he's brought with him four hours' worth of the cassette recordings he made of the group live in 1969. Cherry-picking the best of The Velvets' residencies at San Francisco's Matrix and Family Dog clubs that winter, plus a 28-minute take of "Sister Ray" from Washington University, St. Louis, he and Universal's VU archivist Bill Levinson (who has previously overseen the Peel *Slowly And Steadily* box, and the VU and Another View collections of studio scraps) have reconstructed three facsimile live sets. If that "volume one" tag has any credence, then this constitutes the first chapter of an ongoing "bootleg" series that finally tells the true story of The Velvet Underground. Because, for all the brilliance of their four founding studio documents, the Velvets were a live group above all else. Given their under-promoted records' catastrophically poor sales, they had to be, if

only to eat. However, from the inadequate officially available evidence—Live At Max's Kansas City (featuring Lou Reed's dispirited last stand with the group in 1970) and the erratically great double 1969—any just court would be compelled to turn in an open verdict. Now the release of The Quine Tapes means everyone can discover what the bootleg collectors have been trying to tell them all along. Far from destroying The Velvet Underground's legend, the truer picture emerging from these recordings deeply enriches it. Granted, their debunked reputation is irrevocably shattered by the warm rapport Lou Reed's easy between-song patter engenders with the small yet enthusiastic audiences at the Matrix and the Family Dog. In the process, they also scotch the myth of the antagonistic relationship between sunny, laissez-faire San Francisco and dark, cynical, New York. The Velvet Underground are very evidently enjoying their West Coast trip and, for all the occasionally crudely bootleg quality of Quine's mono cassette recordings, you can hear it in performances relaxed enough to stretch out, ad lib lyrics and experiment with song structures and tempos. "Released" isn't a word you hear a lot around Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground, but how else can you explain an extraordinary 11-minute "I'm Waiting For The Man" (one of the CD set's two versions), wherein Reed rustles up whole new verses and even whistles between them? Naturally, Reed whistling completely blows the tense atmosphere of the first album's definitive recording. But in place of studio original's concrete symmetry and taut documentary realism, at the Matrix Reed plays it like he's recollecting the scenario of a white boy going uptown to score, much later on, when all the tension of the act has dissolved in a state of blissfully opiated tranquility; and his fellow members—Sterling Morrison on guitar, Moe Tucker on drums and John Cale's replacement Doug Yule on bass and organ—are likewise content to buff the rhythm's edges into a rubberised rhythmic mattress so the narrator doesn't hurt himself on it.

Of course, no every truth you learn from this new

**A new Velvet Underground
'official bootleg' series
reveals a legendary group
at the peak of its powers,
says Biba Kopf**

set of hard facts contains a fruitful revelation. Some of the rarer Velvets material first exposed on the 1969 album or the two scrapbook collections will always be throwaway. Because they didn't have to worry about crushing them, however, these throwaway songs often make the best vehicles for the group's jangling guitar raves. Compared with the racing 1969 version, they just can't get up to speed on the take of "Too Much" here, cranking through its creaky changes like an arthritic Bill Haley & The Comets. Elsewhere, they're not about to let their jangling opportunities go to waste. The first CD's romp through "Foggy Notion"—essentially the loopytime flippside of the methedrine-fueled "White Light/White Heat"—is foolishly exhilarating. From the beginning, Reed, Cale, Morrison and Tucker understood better than anyone how to crosswire trance-inducing minimalist monotony and rock 'n' roll crotchet to create an idiot-proof, two-stroke rhythm engine capable of chugging all night. As Cale's replacement, Doug Yule might not have shared his predecessor's understanding of advanced theories of harmony and dissonance, but he sure could keep the pedal pressed to the metal for the duration of Reed and Morrison's extended motorpsycho guitar thrashes. These relatively late versions of The Velvets' most splintering, atonal pieces, namely "White Light/White Heat", "Verus In Furs", "Heroin" and "Black Angel's Death Song", gamely cover Cale's absence in fuzz, distortion and volume leaps. Best of all are the set's three versions of "Sister Ray", clocking in at 24, 28 and 38 minutes, through which the group release whatever emotions they've allowed to build up during the night. All three takes are surprisingly joyous. In place of the original's party nightmare rage, you vainously get slapdash, slapstick and slap 'n' tickle carnival noise, especially on the two spliced with "Foggy Notion", all of them laced with some of Reed's fuzziest guitar freakouts.

By the time the third run-through of "Sister Ray" finally brings The Quine Tapes to a close, now lipstick smeared and whiplashed scars, the legend of The Velvet Underground stands taller than ever. □

ROY CAMPBELL
IT'S KRUNCH TIME
 THIRTY EARL THIRTYFOUR CD
 BY BEN WATSON

Roy Campbell is an intriguing trumpeter. In 1986, his muted, saxo-Oriental contribution to Billy Bragg's *Live At Carlos 2*, was just right. His Pyramid Trio has been turning since 1984 and has used many of New York's first drummers Reggie Nicholson and Sasse (bass), bassists William Parker and Jeffrey Mitchell. For this quarter record, he's again acquired top-notch players: vibist Khan Jamal, bassist Wilber Morris and drummer Guillermo Brown. According to its manifesto, *Thirty Earl's Blue Series* (artistic director: Matthew Shipp) was founded to oppose the "stagnancy" of current trends. Everything bodes well, so how come the disc is disappointing?

Although Andre Ströbert's engineering was sufficient for *The Pyramid Trio's* *Ancestral Homeland* (No More), he is defeated by the tricky sounds of the vibes. At first, it seems like some bizarre San Ra-style stunt to flood the music in vibratone chords (Jamal unleashes some torrential playing on "Rhondung") and misleads Campbell's trumpet to a distant sound. However, added to weak playing by the leader and a noisy studio out-of-focus on "Tide For Mr DC", it feels more like low-budget carelessness. Drums and symbolic snare suggest, inspiring a mass march to out, not in.

Ending with a solo trumpet version "Star Spangled Banner" dedicated to President Bush – legit playing peppered with snickering asides – is cute enough, but if a group is going to recall the glory days of experimental Blue Notes, they need rehearsal time and sound production to match. At the moment, inexpensive digital recording is giving us fine audio photographs of solos and duos by technically inventive improvisers. However, if we are to hear the complex interplay of trumpet, double bass and drumset, let alone a vibist as inventive and crazy as Khan Jamal, we need something more lavish.

BOBBY CONN
THE GOLDEN AGE
 THRILL JOLLY THRELLS CD
 BY BEN HOCKEY

Like painting on canvas, songwriting is one of those human activities that's so dated, you're surprised it can still claim an uncorrupted place in 21st century life. But there you go: it does, walking a pathfully thin line between knowledging and novelty. Just like Bobby Conn, who has crafted a vicious series of little monologues about suburban teenage excess waste and debris around hooks and riffs lifted from 1970s Top 40 radio.

Filled with the memories of some lost and deceased singers, his songs feel like an endless shedding of dead skin, a sloughing off of dangerous manures. "Nikki's kind of a drag," he moans in his wild emotive voice on "Angels", "when a small town beauty is trying to off himself when I'm just trying to get it on for the very first time." In the background you can hear Steely Dan slumming while David Bowie is starting to fall out of love with American soul music. Producer Jim O'Rourke keeps the surface noise sparking, as disco, glam and Country rock collide with each other like kids huffing Ecstasy

rightside at the local roller derby. With John McEntire at work on some of the mixes and Morrice Boubou adding her plangent string arrangements, this release aims low for the most laudatory effect and the cheapest trick. We're talking whoa trash Cooney Rebel here, and that's most likely a compliment. This whole album is basically about what boys get up to when they're alone in their bedrooms. So it comes as no surprise to discover that Conn has a passion for toy helicopters and spends a lot of his time designing helpalps for his home. You can imagine the sketches and magic markers scattered across the carpet while *The Isles' The Hear Is On* plays on the record player. Meanwhile you're feeling like you're on the edge of something unbearable, waiting for punk to happen. Except it already has.

HOLGER CZUKAY
LINEAR CITY
 DIONORÉ DIONORÉ CD
HOLGER CZUKAY & U-SHE
TIME AND TIDE
 DIONORÉ DIONORÉ CD
 BY JULIAN COWLEY

When he recorded *Moves* (1979) and *On The Way To The Peak Of Normal* (1981) Holger Czukay was out on his own, rigorously integrating unlikely samples and allusions into witty and strutting songs. Since then his highly personalised magic has been only sporadically evident. *Linear City* signals a new departure that harnesses Czukay's idiosyncrasies within a constructively experimental project. It's subtitled "Internet Audio Collabs Vol One" and presents four chunky pieces shaped in part by musical choices and input from collaborators who have accessed his Website (see Directory). His signature remains clearly audible but refreshed through participation in these virtual sessions.

Although Czukay sought to escape from "ethno-journalesque" when he entered into this exchange, "Africana Smooth" and its variant "Africana Susekita" are dense montages charged with memories of Can at their most ethnographically authentic. Between them lies the robotic "Etchopri", dislocated voices meshed with skipping rhythms, and the melodramatic epic "Ten Steps". Both feature fitting vocals from Czukay's wife, U-She.

On *Time And Tide*, hatched apparently between 1993 and 1995, U-She assumes a major role. Art critic John Berger has suggested that timing is the skill of playing with silence, debuting it cunningly. By his definition, U-She's timing is flawed on this album. Her voice is too prominent, there's too much of it and its placement lacks cunning. She often resembles Nico in her intonation, but her pastel tinted version *Beat* Nico's surreptitious stinkiness. At its best Czukay's timing has been impeccable. But the 11 songs here have written here are unmemorable, and guest spots from Can colleagues Jak Liebeck and Michael Karoll fail to raise them beyond the pedestrian. Things pick up on U-She's "Without You", with its maximally worded breathers over a thick drone. Unfortunately, the four other U-She songs are not so distinguished. Czukay and U-She got it right on the sparsely paced *La Luta* (recorded 1995, released 1999). On *Time And Tide*, however, they're on theebb

DACHTE MUSIK
DACHTE MUSIK
 GROB 313 4 2XCD
 BY JULIAN COWLEY

During the early 1970s the itinerant trombonist Radu Malfatti was based in London, playing free-wheeling jazz in groups with Chris McGregor, Elton Dean and Nick Evans, and freely improvising with the likes of Harry Miller, Phil Wachsmann, Evan Parker and Frank Perry. He was already in the vanguard back then, and today he works still further out, in such fascinating settings as here with trumpet antagonist Franz Hauzinger and the radical guitarists of Burkhard Stangl and Gerd Schneider.

Malfatti previously played with Stangl in the first incarnation of the group *Polvechae*. The *Dachte Musik* quartet operate at a point beyond *Polvechae's* meticulously posed and contrasting textures. On these two hour-long improvisations, music dissolves into its constituent elements, notes devolve to raw instrumental soundings. Hauzinger has already charted this territory alone on his extraordinary album *Gamborg* (Grob, 2000), and it's fascinating to hear him interacting with like minds. Both pieces are sparsely figured and often extremely quiet, yet they're filled with dramatic tension. The four players click and rattle, pop and scorch, and the gaps between are charged with latent sounds. Tension builds and the alicies feel ready to burst. This is accomplished without reliance upon an abstractable structure. Relationships between articulations are ephemeral, not fixed; still, the music holds together with implausible evenness.

Dachte Musik involves remarkable suppression of conventional virtuosity. These are highly skilled and widely experienced musicians, but individual identities are subordinated to the music's requirements, to the extent that it is often not clear who is playing at any particular time. Instrumental identities are blurred too (trumpet becomes guitar, guitar becomes trombone) and references to musical history are notably absent. Both performances are meditative, yet they grip the attention as they unfold with no plot to remember and no goal in view.

ARTHUR DOYLE & SUNNY MURRAY
LIVE AT GLENN MILLER CAFE
 AKER ATL000 CD
 BY DAVID KEENAN

Saxophonist Arthur Doyle's recent hook-up with drummer Sunny Murray has been extremely fruitful. Murray's a fearless partner, capable of bullying lesser players into marathon grandstanding duels, but Doyle's so completely in his own zone that he never uses Murray's fearless challenge. This CD was recorded in Stockholm, the city where Albert Ayler claimed he first "started to play what was in my soul", and was promptly handed off stage for his son. It's fitting then that the late alto saxophonist Bengt Fripp Nordström, who actually recorded Albert's first "official" cad (released on *Sonet as The First Recordings*) joins Murray for a short run through of some heavily Ayler-reverent material before making way for Doyle. Nordström died six months later, making this final appearance a touching tribute

Tresor.

Fumiyu Tanaka
Unknown Possibility Vol. 2
 CD/Do-EP 86176 2/6 Tresor:176



Neli Landstrumm
She Took A Bullet Meant For Me
 CD/Do-EP 86177 2/6 Tresor:177



Neli Landstrumm
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EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

BERLIN BABYLON

RGD TGO1101 CD

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

STRATEGIES AGAINST ARCHITECTURE III:

1991-2001

MUTE STUMM01 2XCD

The theme of Hubertus Siegert's feature length documentary, *Berlin Babylon*, is "the melancholy of a city undergoing radical change, that, with all its might, wants to win back its ruined structure and outgrow the shadow of the past". Following the narrative of Berlin's urban reconstruction post-1989, concentrating on the power conflicts between construction magnates, architects, city planners and workmen, it's a complex fable of a city caught between the desire for reinvention and the need to invoke the ravaged body of the past as a curse against the wrong kind of future. A counterface to Wim Wenders's *Wings Of Desire*, written in concrete rather than dreams, the film announces that "the leap into the 21st century is turning to stone". What better group to provide a soundtrack capturing the tension between construction and destruction than Einstürzende Neubauten? The choice was inspired, not only because of Neubauten's longterm association with industrial materials – beating music out of rubble and metal – and their concern, since their inception, with "strategies against architecture". But besides this, Neubauten's mining of Expressionist lyricism, and continued probing and reanimating of Berlin's spiritual pasts and underworlds, cleverly chimed with the paradoxical situation Siegert is trying to evoke – a yearning for the city to revive its rightful body, which is phantasmically dislocated from both past and future, circling endlessly round the sites of present transformation and clearance, and playing ambivalently with languages of destruction and dream.

This is, in effect, the psychic domain Neubauten have been carving out for themselves in the last decade, as they've moved from anarchic rage to more languishing and theatrically embellished forms of lyrical disturbance. "The Lay Of The Land", the only extended Biva Bargeld vocal here, taken from their most recent album *Silence Is Sexy*, provides the soundtrack's apotheosis and is an invocation to melancholy – "Meia, Meia, Melancholia floats over the

new city and over the land" – dryly teased in a half-whisper over a cool, understated but tense bass and metal percussion groove. The ghost of Marlene Dietrich, who won't go to rest in the city to which she returned in a coffin, hangs in the sky with outspread wings, "sleepless and with frozen gaze, pointed at rubble, behind her the future piling up". And this image in turn replays that from Berlin intellectual Walter Benjamin's description of the "Angel Of History", which is also read out midway on the album as a talisman of the city's stalled attempt at civic reinvention: "The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed," but a storm blowing from paradise "irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned". Neubauten crank up the noise of the howling storm and the shattering glass.

Lyricism that won't die and the brutalising entrance of reality are themed throughout. This is given force partly by the ubiquitous conjunction of frozen tremolo guitar and loping, punchy bass and drum beat, but often by direct montage, such as the passage where the fragment of a 1934 Berlin Philharmonic recording of the funeral second movement from Beethoven's *Symphony No 3* segues into the sounds of demolition, smashed concrete and the tinkling ring of glass. Shorter tracks intertwine delicacy with fatelfulness, Morricone style: single strokes of bass or piano set against sticks that clatter fleetingly on metal, glass and fragile bells. But it's the taut, understated percussion riffs and piston-like grooves of NU Unruh and Rudi Moser that carry the longer tracks inexorably forward – a counter-industrialisation of the soul, steered against any compromised recovery.

By a devilish coincidence, the month also sees the release of the third instalment of the group's retrospective compilations of unreleased and obscure material. Covering the years 1991-2001, it finds them becoming involved in various dramatic projects – the Viennese street pageant *The Eye Of The Typhoon*, a commission for the Canadian dance company La La Le Human Steps, and Werner Schwab's version of *Faust* – at the same time as their destructive, existential stance drifts from the heights of industrial fury evinced in the BDs into more lyrical and theatrical expressions of spleen, a more international and stylish grand guignol of the soul. As if mirroring this

Matt ffytche picks through the rubble of post-reunification Berlin to uncover Neubauten's role in its reconstruction

turn of events, it's also the decade that saw the departure of machine-tool welding, found-object percussionist FM Einheit, and the regrouping of the original core of Bargeld, Unruh and Alexander Hacke with new members Moser and Jochen Arbeit. Nothing here is quite so funous, raw and abrasive as the material on *Strategies II*, with its emphasis on burning up the soul. The slant on *III* is more on seductiveness and tension, on hypnotic, nervy or motoric rhythms, and a more sculpted and lyrical form of venom. Largely consisting of unreleased material, the set include live versions of "Redukt", in which Bargeld switches between whispering fairytales about the destitute life and a more possessed chorus, in which words are spat out like teeth; and the combative, motorized voodoo of "Ende Neu". Both of them are swagger anthems for the skeletal and the misbegotten. "I Wish This Would Be Your Colour" appears in its original form, a spontaneous improvisation from Neubauten's 1997 European tour, redolent of gargantuan night voyages in cryptically agonised spaces. There's an alternative version of the prowling, ominous "Architektur Ist Geseinsame" ("Architecture Is Hologram-talking") from Berlin Babylon, where the intimate "Blume", appearing in its original French version posing a circular clockwork riff plucked on guitar against the sexily confessional spoken delivery of Diana Orlov, shows the group capable of beauty as well as the beast.

A scattering of tracks present Neubauten's more offbeat side: "Zentrifuge", from *Eye Of The Typhoon*, showcases Unruh's specially built installation of guitars and gongs played by a motorised device; in "Scamp", the members use sound to convey the cooking of a particular dish (Arbeit plays the "aroma...") and "Helium" is a vehicle for Bargeld's high, cartoon-like voice after inhaling the stuff. What's missing, perhaps, is that side of their work which resonated with a wider context of art terrorism and political disillusionment in Berlin, though "Wüste", recorded during the outbreak of the Gulf War, prompted FM Einheit to construct a zone of sand and rubble in the studio, taping the sound of burning oil dripping past the microphone. Still, if the original manifesto of Polaris can't be pursued indefinitely, *Strategies III* shows the aftermath still extending and restoring. □

to someone who lived and breathed film music.

For the rest of the disc Doyle's on twirling and ultra-primitive form, sounding weird Egyptian calls through his horn that roll off into demonic laughter. The tricky job of carving some dynamic out of Murray's relentless cynical and share work draws out some of his rest melancholy, introspective work to date. Doyle's regular showstopper "Nature Boy" opens boldly, only for the saxophonist to start throwing in little questioning phrases until he drops the horn altogether and bursts into song. "Two Face (aka Men Sayak)" is even better, with Doyle ducking and rasping, as Murray fires off round after round in attempt to still him. Doyle's fine slowpieces, called "The Arthur Dove Concept Of Playing The Voice-O-Phone", complete this package. "First you have to come from the belly," he deadpans, "like you are throwing everything out of it." Ringside seats are not recommended.

DRAG CITY SUPERSESSION TRAMPS, TRAITORS AND LITTLE DEVILS

DRAG CITY DC210 CD

BY DAVID KEEGAN

A Drag City Supersession is one of the year's most gloriously stupid releases. Inspired by an A.K. Koppered Supersession with Mike Bloomfield and Steve Shills back in 1966, a host of Drag City's house-players convened to toss riffs under the magnifying glass of Earth Force, Smeagol's Bill Callahan and ex-Royal Lux man Noel Hagerty. It's a fantastic mess from the get-go, with Hagerty's ultra-weird bass playing forcing vocalist Callahan to shake the nannolepsy and make with some rapid tongue action on the opening "Zero Degrees." Edith Frost tamps in an energetic cover of Lou Reed's "Charley's Girl", complete with a doe-wopping chorus over which guitarist Tara Key pouts primitive, mind-splitting fuzz. Teeming through several tracks, her guitar work is gleefully untamed and exhilaratingly full on. Callahan's songs work least well in this company. He's at his best when his material is stripped to meticulously orchestrated near-silence, whereas Noel Hagerty positively thrives on chaos. His "Everyday" is a psychotic piece of bubblegum bromax, fixating with lines like "When you see how I play your jaw is gonna break with any", and completed by Jessica Bailey and Matt Baender's totally bizarre arrangement for horns and strings. He also throws in a high energy stab at Black Sabbath's "MB", gurgling like Dozy, as Tara Key pummels the dirt into submission. It ends with Edith Frost's "One Chord Complaint", a bizarre one-chord moan layered with howling avant horns and strings, and beefed up with the addition of drummer Ryan Murphy and Jim O'Rourke on lead guitar. Apparently, there's more where this came from. A second helping, please.

KAHIL EL'ZABAR & BILLY BANG SPIRITS ENTERING OLYMPIAN DIMENSION CD

BY BEN WATSON

Peacemaker Kahil El'Zabar calls his groups The Ritual Trio and The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, but there's an element of jive-ass showmanship when he moves from trumpet to hand drums, thumb piano or berribar (or, as he does here,

sings a crazy version of "Did Time Religion"). However, if it's not going to be swamped in the solemnity of art or mysticism, jive-ass showmanship should be hailed as part and parcel of the heritage. In the cover photo, with its shades and straw Panama hat, El'Zabar looks like a stoned hipster lounging about in a seedy bar as drawn by cartoonist Ray Lowry.

Just as music hall and clowning play a crucial role in free improvisation, so El'Zabar's ability to shake a rhythm from any instrument provides just the spritzer to form jazz requires. In volkist Billy Bang, who has played avant garde, instrumental ethno-pop, white cube art sales and consummate post-Dreite bebop, he finds his ideal partner.

They begin with the title song, a typical pentatonic blues from Bang, full of unguarded sentiment and tinged with ecstasism. El'Zabar claims a special affinity with Bang, and they balance poignancy, whirly and funk with defiant grace. On "Song Of Myself", the tune references the major chord heartfulness of gospel and Broadway, though an impish sense of rhythm prevents it becoming maudlin. On this straight acoustic recording, El'Zabar's various percussive gymnastics provide textural agitation which bring the music into the orbit of electronic futurism. Bang's testing, enmeshed lines start together a ceaseless dialectic between linear logic and folk rhythm. Plaintive whole tone sinewaves veer off into scabbed extensives with delightful, exposed-nerve logic. The result is individual and fresh, the project of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago shorn of its theatrical trappings and distilled into the notes themselves. On first listening, sound production seemed rather weedy (it would be good to hear Bang on one of AUM Fidelity's in your face recordings), but finally the spindly details add up to a spellbinding experience: a beaskan rub-a-dub in 3D feel-o-vision.

In April, Billy Bang played a Blutch Morris composition at New York Tonic, his personality totally suppressed by Morris's dictatorial baton. El'Zabar's funny timbre reassures us that Bang is still himself, his unlikely mix of sentiment and caustic still firing.

GOEM DISCO

FOURTH DIMENSION FDBX CD

BY JIM HAYNES

The post-Techno outfit Goem began purely out of serendipity, when Roel Meekap brought a strange electrical device called a "tender stimulator" to Kapotte Muziek, the musique concrète group he shares with Frans De Waard and Peter Daevelinks. Perhaps something like a square wave generator, this machine offered pulses at varying speeds and lengths, to which the two applied light delays, EQ treatments, subtle synths and additional beats from a broken Dr Rhythm drum machine. The resultant ping pong motorik rhythm presented a much more structuralist discourse than the recorded sound of Kapotte Muziek and thus warranted the entry of Goem into the Muziek "network" of projects, Begeenen, Shits, Quest, THU20, Freidraad and Captain Black, set up to accommodate these prolific artists.

Tue to its title Disco, the unwavering rhythmic pulses on Goem's self album hold an unmistakable connection to the Techno

minimalism of early Sähkö recordings. Yet where Mike Varro and Ilpo Väisänen had their 'complex sound generators' built with specific crystalline tones in mind, Goem revel in their staid stimulator's 'mistakes', coaxing cable buzz and malfunctioning crackle into tightly controlled plastic exercises marked by a steady bass thump. The choice of slow to mid-tempo rhythms make it clear that Goem aren't about to topple Giorgio Moroder — unless the generator is swimming in a sea of anisotropic ether.

HILMAR ÖRN HILMARSSON & SIGUR RÓS ANGELS OF THE UNIVERSE

FAT CAT FAT007 01 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

These key players within Iceland's current creative surge collaborate here on the soundtrack for *Angels Of The Universe*, a film directed by Friðrik Thor Friðriksson. Formerly a member of Psychic TV and now well established as his country's most prominent film composer, Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson wrote the bulk. His music is scored for violins, acoustic guitar and percussion sparsely distributed against electronic clouds and washes, and on initial listening it drifts serenely by, in the way a Popol Vuh soundtrack might when detached from its movie. With further listening a more takes shape — melancholy, wistful, elegiac. It's stamped with an effective simplicity that is commonly associated with spiritual values and aspirations, surged of everyday human complexity. Sigur Rós contribute two concluding tracks: a brooding and steadily intensifying pomp rock treatment of a traditional lullaby that merges with a suitably somber version of the funeral music accompanying death announcements on Icelandic national radio. Both pieces were previously available on the quarter's *My Baiter EP* (2000), but they sit remarkably well as the capstone to the soundtrack's solemn architecture, translating the personal mood evoked by Hilmarsson into terms of collective sentiment, private feelings amplified into public ceremonial. If some of Hilmarsson's music bears traces of Pink Floyd at their most pastoral, Sigur Rós touch upon the calculated grandeur of early King Crimson. Of course, they're not alone in their retrieval of elements of value from the corpus of Progressive Rock. Such a process fits into a certain understanding of life. Hilmarsson confided to Rob Young (*The Wire* 2003), "the invisible world is always with us. I think magic and ritual works only if you believe in it." This album may be the soundtrack to an age-old cycle, then, the old myths leaping back to soften a hard-headed world.

WAYNE HORVITZ & THE FOUR PLUS ONE ENSEMBLE FROM A WINDOW

AWANT AWANT00 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Disgracefully a member of John Zorn's Naked City, Wayne Horvitz is a keyboard player whose intriguing work is always worth a second look. His relatively low profile is maybe due to the subtlety of his approach, and his sheer variety. Unlike Bill Frisell, for instance, Horvitz doesn't have an instantly recognisable voice. His 80s

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JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER

LIBERATION

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JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER THE MAGIC FIRE MUSIC

ECSTATIC PEACE 5970 202LP

To the current generation, the 1960s are slipping slowly into the depths of history, with their cultural, social and political ramifications losing some of their immediate impact. Greyed old men, frumpy women and grizzled burnouts extol the idealism that they held in their youth, wondering why today's children show little interest in their revolutionary past. It may be inevitable that the 60s will simply dissolve into a text, devoid of the emotional impact that Paris 1968 held for Europe or the assassination of JFK for America. Yet below these commonplace narratives, mysterious strands of undiscovered mythologies, conspiratorial conundrums and compelling fairy tales continue to grow out of the detritus of 60s culture. These secret histories are the fodder for the convoluted pantheon constructed by Portland's avant rock ensemble Jackie-O Motherfucker.

On one end of the spectrum of the pantheon, Jackie-O present their namesake, former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, as a sombre icon of grace, utopian dreams and the redemption of an entire country through her mourning. And on the other, there is the mispish spirit of musicologist and animator Harry Smith, perhaps best known for his curation of *Folkways' Anthology Of American Folk Music*. While Smith's amazing collection jumpstarted the folk movement of the 60s, it wasn't so much a "best of", but rather a demonstration of Smith's philosophy, with its insistence on the interconnectedness of all things. Smith's interest in Appalachian folk music, hokum blues, Navajo rhapsodies, Ukrainian painted eggs and hermetic

alchemy was never an undefinable eclecticism, but rather a complex extrapolation out of the transcendence of primitivism.

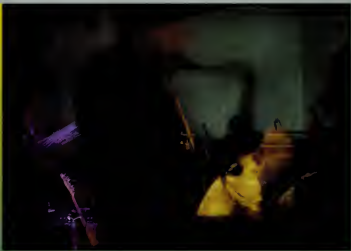
Kennedy might stand as the diametrically opposite symbol of sobriety and beauty against Smith's squallor and rhizomatic logic, but Jackie-O Motherfucker find common ground within the whispered "what if?" that follows both individuals. In Jacqueline Kennedy, the question becomes "what if JFK hadn't been shot?" Yet in Smith, the question is far more down to earth: "what if the communal aspects of bluegrass, rock and jazz were taken to their most libertarian extreme?" Jackie-O Motherfucker cultivate their own transcendence in bridging the improbable dream with this unlikely musical hodgepodge. Their empathic speech may also be muttering such further improbabilities as if blissful daydreams on a lazy summer afternoon: "What if the Symbionese Liberation Army overthrew the US government?", "What if Jandek became a top 40 commodity?", "What if the river flowed upstream?". Knowing full well that none of these could ever come true, Jackie-O articulate them as bittersweet, meandering half-structures of lethargic blues inspired guitar licks, sputtering sax lines and amorphous percussion.

Liberation, their seventh album, tumbles through its opening track with an uncompromising, free noise squallor worthy of the lack of structure found in The No Neck Blues Band and Sun City Girls. The ensuing "Ray-O-Graph" is comparatively composed, with its cheap but unwavering beatbox and a twangy guitar that repeats its bent notes at an unhurried pace, while the rest of the massive ensemble make themselves known with a quiet racket. This play between patterned composition and free improvisation is one of the few consistencies that Jackie-O will announce in their work;

the rest is a rough-hewn jumble of obtuse metaphor, creak noise and beguiling indifference. Just when the erosion and upheaval of form starts to make sense, Jackie-O issue forth an honest to God song in "Something On Your Mind", a backwoods ballad complete with Southern drawl and front porch stomp. For all of its sonic complexities, Liberation lives up to its name as an album content in the disorienting freedom to allow oneself to wander.

Where Liberation's contradictions are guided much more by Harry Smith, the Ecstatic Peace double LP *The Magick Fire Music* finds Jackie-O Motherfucker looking to Jackie Kennedy Onassis herself as their muse. Here, the ensemble present a more structured facade with the melodramatic crescendos of high lonesome guitars, and place less of an emphasis upon the cascading free jazz rhythms and undefined polyphonic dissonance. "Extension" opens the album with a buned collage of shortwave radio heterodyning and disconnected voices, but emphatically steps forward with a guitar duet between a saddened David Page-like riff and an intertwining effects-laden chimed tone. After the clunky bang of Jew's harps on "Bone Saw", Jackie-O return to the evocative, spacious and cinematic Western riffs (especially on the breathtaking melancholy of "The Cage") as an effective means of transcribing sound into a psychic landscape that is strangely similar to *Godspeed You! Black Emperor!*. However, where *Godspeed!* bracket their tight orchestrations around a social pessimism that eventually leads to a cathartic enlightenment as to how shitty the world is around us, Jackie-O Motherfucker settle back into a drugged stupor of oddly psychedelic grooves that are less cryptic messages, and more consoling visions from America's past. □

Jim Haynes is liberated by Jackie-O Motherfucker's conspiratorial conundrums and cathartic enlightenment



group, The President, treaded in *serica*, paired down melodies. In the 90s, his Hammond B3 organ propelled the haunted funk of *Zoey Mash*. The Four Plus One Ensemble, meanwhile, shows a mellower, acoustic side, with Horvitz playing more piano: grand, prepared and toy. Violinist Eyvind Knaag, from Friele's acoustic quartet, lines up with Reggie Watts (keyboards), Slerk (bassoon sax) and Julian Pressler (the trombonist from Herbie Hancock's Sextant group).

"Plus One" is the cunning inclusion of Tucker Martini performing live electronic processing. With a splash of echo here, a string of reversed samples there, or treating the sax as if heard down a phone line, he contributes colour while adhering to the discretion and modesty that is the group ethos. Though no one does anything so vulgar as take a solo, the music could be called postmodern cool jazz. Horvitz made a good example of this on his 1987 *Man* with Bush Morris and Bobby Previte, *Nine Below Zero*, where the three musicians split their time between leaving huge amounts of space and doubling on deep frozen GR7 keyboards. 14 years later, The Four Plus One have a more nostalgic urge — King's viola on the title track refers to folkloric colour and aching Scandinavian mores. Horvitz's laser notes have a pleasantly domestic quality, as he recruits how he wrote most of their previous CD (for intuition) one sleepless night on an Italian family holiday. The mood is energetic with a touch of swing, even hymnal at times, and this is barely disturbed even on the two occasions a firm drum machine track lods in. There is plenty of intimate, attentive group improvising and — that Horvitz speciality — negative space. But Horvitz's melodic material, while fragmentary, is soulful and effective. Coupled with Pressler's beautifully melodic trombone, this is what stops the music drifting off into inconsequentiality, and makes for a satisfying album.

NOAH HOWARD

RED STAR

DECCA/INTL DSD14 CD

BY ALAN CUMMINGS

Noah Howard is one of the few great freedom players of the 60s to retain even a hesitant grasp on the flame. More than 30 years on from the New Orleans artists debate on ESP and the forgotten classic *The Black Ark*, he's still capable of firing off sweetly spirital and ferily sensual fusillades. During the bleak years following the deaths of John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, Howard moved to Europe, joining the free jazz diaspora of exiles like Frank Wright, Alan Silva and Sunny Murray. European recognition had as downside in American obscurity. However, during the past few years releases on Emigre and this latest reissue on the emergent Vermont label Boldstrider have brought Howard to wider attention again.

Originally a Europe-only release in 1977, *Red Star* has long been one of the rarest and most tantalising items in Howard's discography. Much of the interest is down to the participation of another longtime jazz exile, the drummer Kenny Clarke, who participated in those legendary early 40s pre-bo sessions at Minton's with Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Christian and Orzy Gillespie. The quartet on the *Red Star* session also include longtime Howard collaborator and sterling pianist Bobby Fox, and trumpeter Richard Williams. The group sound like

they're anxious not to lighten Clarke on the first two tracks, which are perfectly acceptable as background music the next time you invite your parents over for a barbecue. So long as you're not looking to the live music to light it, the piece ambles languidly, its big bold themes carefully stated, and everyone gets ample solo space (Few's bluesy piano is especially good), but the pyrotechnics are held well in check. Things hot up a bit on the lengthy final track. Clarke picks up the tempo, effectively fracturing a horn and there with some of his famous cymbal 'bombs' Howard, Fox and Williams smear some beautiful rapid solos, and the whole has a messily vibrant feel. Nothing revolutionary then, but it's still a fascinating collaboration.

PANDELIS KARAYORGIS TRIO

BLOND BALLAD

LEO UNDIS CD

KARAYORGIS/MCBRIDE/VANDERMARK

NO SUCH THING

BOCKHOLTER DSD1018 CD

BY BILL SCHOEMER

Pandelis Karayorgis is a stealthy pianist. The gist of his music is often only implied, especially when he employs the slow and medium-slow tempi that dominate *Blond Ballad*. A phrase trails off into silence; a sustained note lingers like fog, a chord is blown out like a candle. Such moments mix slowburn jazz with intensity and a tentative, even flinching vulnerability with uttering cogency. While Karayorgis's surfaces invite comparisons with Ravi Shankar and Misha Mengelberg, richly layered undercurrents of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn give the album much of its emotional impetus. Remotely related to Ellington's "Frustration", "Centennial" veers from alluring, bluesy lines to the faux awkwardness of phrases voiced in seconds to create a subtle emotional tension. The Strayhorn inspired title piece tosters between tenderness and desolation, its theme thick with sighs and gasps. Both tracks are fine starting points for examining the serene interplay of Karayorgis, bassist Nate McBride and drummer Randy Peterson. If you thought the jazz piano trio format had atrophied long ago, think again.

On *No Such Thing*, Karayorgis, McBride and Ken Vandermark, who is heard here mainly on claviers, reach the apex of Jerry Goffin's classic early 60s trio with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, and Karayorgis's abiding interest in Lonnie Tipton's expanded sense of form and timbre. However, their materials added far beyond the 'soft jazz' Goffin articulated on his trio's LPs for *Love* and Columbia's Vandermark's *Sleak Into The Sun* opens the set with the bristling staccato shapes commonly associated with Anthony Braxton's music of the 70s. Even when a gentler attack and hints of a walking tempo hold sway, as on Karayorgis's "SBC", the thematic materials have an acute angularity that makes Goffin's music quaint by comparison. Additionally, Karayorgis, McBride and Vandermark also delve into spy neo cool on such rewarding tracks as McBride's "27 Valentine" and Vandermark's "Let Me Know", the latter benefiting from the composer's smouldering tenor. On these tracks, Karayorgis's study of Tipton's music is most readily apparent in his rhythmic, which is effortlessly smooth despite choppy accents and dense voicings; and, like Tipton, he uses rhythm to stir his cohorts.

HELMUT LACHENMANN

MOUVEMENT (VOR DER ERSTARRUNG)

KAIROS 001320284 CD

HELMUT LACHENMANN

ALLEGRO SOSTENUTO

KAIROS 001321384 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

"A music of dead movements", "pseudo-activity" and "hubble from imposed rhythms" are the phrases Helmut Lachenmann uses to describe the material in his 1984 ensemble work *Movement* (*Vor Der Erstarrung*). Although the scratchy, scorched surface of his music is often compared to live improvisation, his references are purely Germanic. The 'dead movements' and 'imposed rhythms' are an acknowledgement that the great roaring Germanic tradition that produced Beethoven, Mahler and Schubert ground to a shattering halt somewhere during the opening decades of the 20th century. His music is a comment on how to rebuild a language from the ghosts of the past. His groundbreaking 1979 article, "The Beautiful in Music Today", lambasts composers who try to rediscover an idealised vision of German music through cheap allusion and quotation. For Lachenmann, "inherited categories of communication" offered by the structures and forms of 18th and 19th century music must be challenged by "offering resistance to the utopianism embodied (within) them".

The resistance offered in *Movement* (*Vor Der Erstarrung*), translated as *Movement* (Before Paralysis) is fundamentally structural. Attempts made by the material to evolve into large scale, sweeping statements are constantly foiled as it disintegrates, rendered inept by paralyzing motor rhythms that overwhelm everything else. Beethoven's ideal of large-scale structure growing organically is turned on its head. This is music that develops through discontinuity. The obsessive tick-tock of piercing woodblocks, the rude spurts of brass and fizzing strings are realised with considerable ease and panache by Ringbom Wien under Hans Zender. The quizzical trumpet call that rams things in near the end has never sounded so volatile and the performance ends with an organic display of extreme textures and spluttering sounds — a perfect fitting of minds between composer and ensemble.

On the same disc, the solo piano *Sonyade* was completed in 2000 and is played here by its dedicatee, the Japanese pianist Yukio Sugawara (who also happens to be Min Lachenmann). At last year's Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Lachenmann spoke about his concept of utilising everything the piano has to offer including the wood, the sound of the pedals and harmonics. Much of the music in *Sonyade* happens in the hazy cracks between dense clusters and fragmented runs, as Lachenmann explores the resonating possibilities of tapping sounds through the use of the sostenuto and sustaining pedals. It is music of colossal ambition, and Sugawara honours her husband's requests with dazzling mental and physical energy.

On the other CD *Sugawara* is paired by cellist Lucas Fels and clarinetist Shizuo Oka for an equally authentic performance of Lachenmann's classic 1988 work *Allegro Sostenuto*. The composer builds what he considers to be a 'meta-instrument' out of the natural resonances of his trio. The piece starts

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with common chords that unexpectedly spring from textures, while cadences take wrong turnings as the music builds into an enormous half hour structure. Relying on little more than the underlying adhesion of the relationship between clarinet, piano and cello, he eliminates any possibility of 'unlifer' structures.

**LALI PUNA
SCARY WORLD THEORY**
MORR MUSIC 029 CD/EP

BY JOHN MULVEY

It was only a matter of time before the ambitious Weillman collective of musicians clustered around Markus Acher worked their way around to pop. Acher's group Tied & Tickled Trio may hybridise jazz and electronics. The Notwist place those influences into an avert rock context; Console and Village Of Savageous deal respectively in 'light' and 'dark' sample-led music. But Lali Puna draw on the subtlety and grace that unite most of this extraordinary scene's musical projects, and pursue them to more conventional ends.

If Scary World Theory is essentially anti-pop, it's far removed from the 80s revival that continues to infiltrate indie-rock fashions. Lali Puna - the breathless Acher, alongside keyboardist Florian Ziemer, Tied & Tickled drummer Christoph Brandner and, crucially, singer Valerie Trebeljahr - specialise in a kind of killing accessibility, emerging out of bobbing electronic structures, their tunes are propelled by a live rhythm section, with Trebeljahr softly humming over the top.

The understated momentum of many of these tracks recalls Tarkenton's "The Waterscape". But where that Berlin duo rely on a sense of detachment, often sourcing lyrics from found texts, Lali Puna are much more emotionally engaging. Although at first Trebeljahr's words come over hushed and inconsequential, there's real substance in the way she and the group deal with personal politics and empowerment explicitly and successfully.

On Scary World Theory, the group's second album, Trebeljahr appears to be predominantly fixed on the idea that independent thought has the capacity to transcend the system that surrounds it. But if she advocates or counsels her listeners, she does so quietly. On paper, her lyrics may read like cross signifying, but her gentle voice and the music's steady pulse deliver the message by stealth rather than from the soapbox.

**LANTNER/MANERI/MORRIS
VOICES LOWERED**
JED UNIT CD

BY BEN WATSON

When saxophonist Joe Maneri gave a talk on "musical improvisation" at the South Bank last year, he steered perilously close to wackering the gravitas which aids promotion relies on. Microtonal improvisation has actually existed for centuries, he explained, it's all those bad asses made when musicians play music not tuned in the academy. Although Maneri stated 12-tone composition for ten years with Josef Schirmer, himself a pupil of Alban Berg, he hasn't forgotten that the people who really love music play it. His big, soft, breathy saxophone sound is alive with the sense of listening - fascination for other people's

playing - that characterises pertinent improvisation. You feel it at once on the excellent recording made by Antonio Diari at the WGBH Radio Studio in Boston last year.

Nevertheless, Maneri's technical understanding of the liberties taken by blues and jazz players does make a difference. On two tracks here, Steve Lantner plays two pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart. On "Dirty Danes", he introduces a crazy, partly felt, which suits Joe Maneri's Shapp-Ike guitar on tenor and Joe Morris's pointillist guitar after three throes and two duets with Maneri and Morris. Lantner performs two tracks unaccompanied, as if reflecting on what the others have played. When he returns to the paired quarter-tone pianos, he recaptures the ringing, swinging feel of the two Menis. Jokes aside, there is something to Maneri's "microtonal" theory of jazz.

Voices lowered is an apt description of the music. The three musicians hit at mighty rhythmic forces, but keep them in their heads. The few notes to escape are dramatically sparse. Maneri is skilled at isolating one note of a multiphonic drone, then pursuing it into an intimate lyrical moment. When Morris lays out, you miss his sense of a blues grove, his tight Cool-like motifs which tug the tension. His notes are sprightly past, with no seal of ambient style to tag the note releases.

When all three play, the music applies and bubbles. They are cognisant of each other harmonically, but only in the instant. This sensation of mobile foundations is exhilarating or disturbing, according to your response to Maneri's demand for a modern art with its feet planted firmly in the art traditional virtues - well-tuned instruments, a perfect ear, deliberate harmony or dissonance - are used to relate to each other's playing rather than to an overarching schema. This jazz is cool and understated, yet the freedoms it opens up are as dizzying as any braced by the bluster school.

**YOSHIO MACHIDA
HYPERNATURAL #2**
SOFTL MUSIC 5001 CD

BY DAVID ELLIOTT

Yoshio Machida's first album, *Hypernatural* (1999), came in a black box with photos and a feather. His second, produced by Aki Onda, comes in an intricately wrapped sleeve which conceals as it deceives. Is that hair underneath the text cover? Unwrap it and you'll never get it back together again. This is a typical Machida piece. His music and photographs - though this time the cover by someone else - are slow to reveal their inner selves. The theme of *Hypernatural #2*, he says, is "transparent existence", or "the reality and the continuity between phenomena in the area of unconsciousness and consciousness". That is, the eight pages recorded here are akin to some investigations of chosen states in time and space. No, the concept's not new, but Machida handles it intelligently and sensitively. In some ways, *Hypernatural #2* parallels Hazard's Wind, and the work of John Duncan, Russell Mills and Ian Walton, in its sourcing of nature sounds. "Potential" ripples a metallic undercurrent through running water. Taped in Ghana, "Malana" is reminiscent of Eric's field recordings for *Our Land*, "Radiant Wind",

meanwhile, is the sound of a gently struck Vietnamese gong borne away on a breeze. It's not entirely organic - Machida surely employs piano and organ, and his interest in Korean software is evident.

**STEVE MARTIND
HORSES OF INSTRUCTION**
BLACK BOX BMH035 CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

When Steve Martind first burst on the contemporary music scene with an album on Factory's short-lived Classical imprint in 1989, the flurry of attention he aroused accelerated the emergence of his music. Following in the tracks of his mentor Louis Andriessen, Martind's early work was certainly post-minimal. But if the orchestral rigour of, say, Bob Yir or his companion work Deil had an implicit model in Shostakovich's symphonies, he had also learned something about accessibility from Michael Nyman's *Carpenter's Band*, Lost Jockey et al.

12 years on, the nine pieces dating from 1986-1998 on *Horses Of Instruction* reveal that Martind's compositional style has lost none of its old vigour, even as it has matured. Originally commissioned for The Bang On A Can All-Stars, the title piece's fiercely rhythmic nature is here realised by the 11 piece Martind Band anchored by a drummer. His structures are sound, if not exactly new - short, expressive phrases dangled with hocketing rhythms - but his imaginatively worked variations mark them out as modern. Martind's minimalist moments rarely fail the listener into a state of reverie, and when they do, staccato brass states usually act as an alarm call.

What makes this disc so compelling is the musical range it explores. *Teminal* (1998) has a dangerous undercurrent of cross-rhythms and a fuzzy guitar. Dense motifs ascend and descend step up throughout the collection, but also for quieter moments. The brass on *Mr. Anderson's Pasture* has stately movement with a very English melancholia, while *Kick* - essentially a series of five violin-led variations on a folk theme - has an urgency, moral purity the longer *Beate The Redhead* and *Eternal Delight* show how Martind's grip on his material is grounded in his flexible imagination. In all, an excellent return.

**MATTIN/PREVOST/PARLANE
SAKADA**
WMDR CD CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Music is hard enough to write about but this release is especially resistant. The postcard sized cardboard sleeve has minimal information, simply noting that all compositions are by the trio, and that the disc is recorded at the LMC Studio in March this year. Percussionists Eddie Prevost and Rosy Parlane produce sounds subjected by Mattin to computer feedback, creating a raw industrial soundscape. Electroacoustic and industrial noise is becoming pervasive within European music. I don't think it's a technophile's lament to say that this creates some critical problems. Technologists can throw sounds around quickly and effectively, creating interesting scene events, but it's hard to assess their improvisational prowess. The danger of

creating a kind of musical sludge from improvisation's individual efforts can result in formless and toneless music.

The recording is divided into four untitled tracks. The first rapidly becomes overpowering in its visceral, low-end assault. The second begins as gently impressionistic, with high frequency white-noise, the final part continues the exploration of high frequency sounds. To say I won't be playing it often isn't a criticism: this is an awesome soundtrack, to be listened to sparingly.

MR LEN PITY THE FOOL: EXPERIMENTS IN THERAPY BEHIND THE MASK OF MUSIC WHILE HANGING OUT DUMMY SMACKS

MAJORDA OLSZEWSKI CD/EP

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

"What's the word, Mr. Len?" asks Breezy Brewin of the Juggalos. His producer responds by slung up his bass and tossing the shards between the speakers like so many nuptial stars. On his premiere solo effort *Pity The Fool*, the conceptual misadventure at the heart of Company Flow gets to the max of hip-hop's more acerbic voices, including Chuck Rock, D-Sty, Mr. Live (of Get These) and Jean Grae. Nearly all of them give on-or-as-press to his abilities behind the console; and, as in Grae's case, they dog him about his low life. Mr. Len incorporates these about-facts into the cocky quill of an album which, like James Brown's 60s stage shows, has something for everyone: radio skits, found recordings from what sounds like Len's forehead, hardcore rap, Heavy Metal and reggae. If Mr. Len has a spiritual forefather, it must be Ray P. Peace. Those playful yet deadly 'everything and the kitchen sink' production style casts a long shadow over *Pity The Fool*. Similarly, almost anything is given for Mr. Len's full. Len's tritone-styled piano loops mumble beneath Jean Grae's convulsive rap on "The Hurt," in counterpart to her defiant sign-off, "The only way I like it is raw".

Grae reappears throughout, most notably on the album's centerpiece, the seven minute "Boo Day," the chilling confession of a seemingly perfect student who opens fire on her family and classmates, set to a sepulchral organ phrase. The track's dramaticity stands in bold relief against Lee Star's "Girl (Go To Give Me It)," during which the DJ quotes from The Naptunes' "Fatty Fatty." Elsewhere, the *Acoustic Q-Uince* summons the ambience of Agents rock over electric beats for "Strong," and *Agents Of Man* wear an unstoppable hybrid of Heavy Metal and beat being on "Force Field," complete with hammerphone inducing feedback and crushing power chords. The fuzztone Halloween theatre of Mr. Live's "Dummy Smacks" meshes well with the epic slice of dysfunctional life called "Family Matters," that Mr. Len can fuse these disparate strands into something like a coherent whole vindicates the album's overarching ambition.

NIOBE RADIOERSATZ

70MLAB T0M14 CD

BY DAVID ELLIOTT

This short but aptly named album comes across like songs broadcast from a radio

station in a parallel universe. Yet it could just as easily be a random sample, notes and all, from our own. Whichever way you approach it, there's something distinctly 'wrong' about it. Its author, Cologne based Yvonne Cornelius, samples her own voice in such a way that it appears to have been culled from old records; or it has been passed around the world, Chinese whisper style, until the source has trouble recognising it when it finally gets back to her.

"Troubles Of Sensual Life" is a muffled torch song with Golliwinkles, "Radio Mexico" sets up a highly unlikely encounter between Cluster and The Residents; "Everybody Shakes A Lounge" is sung by a world-weary femme fatale from the gutter of Sunset Boulevard over Martin Denny at 16rpm; and the extraordinary "I Took It Off" is a broken-voiced lament amid a lo-fi rumble – a perfect soundtrack for the inevitable mad scene in a David Lynch movie. At 26 minutes, it's less an album than a tantalising trailer for the big feature, hopefully coming soon...

YOKO ONO BLUEPRINT FOR A SUNRISE

PARLOPHONE PROMO CD

BY JAHAM COWLEY

Embedded in the throbbing heart of Yoko Ono's first album in five years are two live tracks. One is a strong reading of the title song from its predecessor. Rising, in the course of which Yoko reverts to Japanese, the other is "Muberry", a simple naming which lifts into a wild improvised exchange with her son Sean Lennon on electric guitar. Her songwriting has never sounded more focused, but her trustiest fans need not worry: Ono has not discarded the repertoire of wails, shrieks and wailations that she practised to the amusement of Ono's Coleman's fans at London's Albert Hall in 1968, albeit to the dismay of Beatles fans worldwide. Rather she's found ways to incorporate those disorienting sounds into increasingly assured song structures, adding expressive fibre to poignant private observations and acerbic political declarations.

Ono's feminism provides the backbone for this varied set. "I Want You To Remember Me", a dramatic diptych that confronts male violence head-on, channels outrage into a harrowing interplay of voices, set in rock that reverberates with static Plastic Ono Band memories. Here it's clear how her naked voice seizes the initiative when words fail.

The world may be catching up at last with Ono's screams. Now it needs to come to terms with her song. The innocuous melody of "Woodbird", for instance, serves as a conduit for viral, its casual swing bearing a properly venomous load. "I'm Not Getting Enough" bemoans lack of personal fulfillment over a perfectly incongruous sunny reggae beat. Meanwhile, the saccharine persona she assumes on "Are You Looking For Me?" raises a Gothic nightmare that dissolves with alarming suddenness into pastoral birdsong. Evidently the album is suffused with the same ironic quality that has anchored her work as a visual and performance artist for 40 years.

Celebrity of a peculiarly equivocal kind has not dulled Ono's edge, and at the age of 68 her intensity is undiminished. On "I Remember Everything" she registers loss. But as this title

indicates, *Blueprint For A Sunrise* looks to the future with determination.

ORCHESTRA TERRESTRIAL HERE AND ELSEWHERE

DE STADT OBOE CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

What remains hidden in a name? At its heart, an orchestra is a romantic organisation of tones and textures created around an almost militant passion for order. Conductors and field marshals have both been known to wield a mean baton. This might explain Orchestra Terrestrial's somnambulant exuberance with landmass and location, as signalled at the outset with the deep swelling oscillations of "Low Delirium Alpine Drift". Although there's something deeply impressive about the sheer sense of discipline that holds this steady outpouring of finely tuned sounds together, it's thanks only to Richard H Kirk's interventions as producer and arranger that this project develops any kind of emotional depth or life of its own.

With the sole possible exception of Pete Waterman, no other UK producer has used rhythm quite as intelligently as Kirk over such an extended period of time and change, from the basic rock beat through hip-hop, electro and dub, Ambient House and techno. Throughout his career, the continuous movement towards structure and rhythmic subtlety has characterised Kirk's recorded work, rather than the random noises, soundtrack inserts and noises that have been incorporated within it. "Enlifer", for example, is a delicate mesh of sound quietly reminiscent of the more serene moments on his first Electronic Eye release, or "Lagoon West" from *Virtual State* (Warp). "Kistral" and "Gitterstahl" benefit from the sharp beats boldly counterpointed within them: it's through the complex organisation of rhythms, rather than melody line or timbres, that Kirk approaches the richness of the classical orchestra.

MARGRÉT ÖRNÓLFSDÓTTIR MÁR

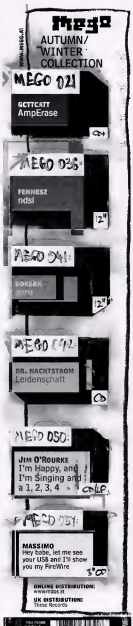
SMUGGLEYS SWEDEN/SMAS CD

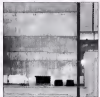
BY LOUISE GRAY

If memories of The Sugarcubes are still capable of sending out sin calls into the ether, it's possible that Már, by the group's former keyboard player, may exercise some reflected ally. Margrét Örnólfsdóttir has spent her post-Sugarcubes existence scoring music for films, *Enkelt* and *Concrete Dreams* among them, and theatre. To a great extent, Mar reflects these various aspects.

With Örnólfsdóttir as yet to develop a distinctive solo style (very little of the Sugarcubes' obvious enthusiasm survives here), Mar lacks a coherent voice of its own, it wears widdly from the heavy-handed drums and electronic burnings of "The Ocean" to the tentatively blocked out piano chords of "Love Song". Just when a theme may develop, around sparsely treated flute and keyboard motifs, these, it's washed away on a wave of oceanic synthesizer effects better suited to a disc of New Age nothings.

Örnólfsdóttir is best when she breaks things down into their simplified components. The five tracks banded as *Salka Vala* have an airy, atmospheric innocence, and Örnólfsdóttir's





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acoustic solo could be a sex shanty by way of composer/improviser Howard Skempton. But such moments are too rare. Pointless soft shoe jazz numbers, incidental fillers or even a section that recalls Kraftwerk's "Kometenmelodie" do not redeem the album.

ORTON SOCKT 99 EXPLOSIONS

MICHAEL COO
BY MIKE BARNES

Osculating his first instrument, the cornet, to flourish over a Powerbook, Orton Sockt is the ever-profiled Rob Mazurek's solo electronics project featuring contributions from Ken "Bundy" Brown, John Hennessy and Jeff Parker, all from Chicago's Tortoise/Lotuspe 217 axis, with Mazurek label boss Jim O'Rourke joining him on the final edit. Mazurek has used treatments and electronics before to make up the numbers or color the moods of The Chicago Underground Duo/Trio/Quartet, but his Orton Sockt project reveals his kinship with the Austrian Mega label, while nodding back to musique concrète and 1970s analogue electronics.

Predominantly made up of shortish abstract electronics tableaux, these listening reveals a myriad of details lurking in the mix. Gradually emerging into earshot are the found sounds and gliss of lines that have been edited and re-edited to the point where it is often impossible to identify either their source instruments, if any, or the processes they have been subjected to. On "Car Lights And Rain", Mazurek and Parker evoke the title image by combining pulses and a sweeping white noise signal together with clusters of electronics and disturbing machine noises. "Ice Dike" shows some semblance of a conventional melodic structure with what sounds like electric piano chords pitched against a disembodied loop of human or mechanical wheezing and sequenced or looped synthetics. "Hydrogen Man" closes proceedings with an unorthodox mélange of tracking logic, snatches of speech and distant gongs. These are all sucked down a sink hole, which burps back electronic signals.

Making the independent sector's usual half-hearted attempt at marketing, someone has proposed Orton Sockt as the wanguard of a new genre, "melancholy electronics", in a half-leading tone in case the category doesn't catch on. Well, for one, it's not particularly accurate. Mazurek's deft pantheism touches convey far more than lyrical interpretation.

PULP

PULP
UNIVERSAL RELEASE COLUMBIA CD/DP
BY JOHN MURLEY

For all their mainstream success in the 90s, Pulp have always stood firmly in the art pop tradition of British music, aspiring to be subversive but populist, and channeling outsider elements into traditional structures. On 1998's *The Love Songs*, their bitter yet entertaining meditation on fame, that impulse was most pronounced on the title track, constructed around an orchestral loop from Peter Thomas's *Reunited* score.

On this seventh and superficially more organic album, they repeat the trick on "The Trees", this time sampling a glither of Stanley Myers's score to Olly. Interesting, but hardly radical. And then

you note that Scott Walker is the album's unlikely producer. And suddenly the artificial recreation of lushness in "The Trees" implicitly references the arrangements of Walker's 60s albums.

One of the mysterious pleasures of Pulp is trying to figure out just how they combined the elusive Pulp to get involved in a project that often echoes his own music – or at least the records he was making more than 30 years ago. The jarring, quasi-industrial textures of his most recent song album *731* are nowhere to be found here.

Instead, it's as if he has seized upon Pulp as the rightful heirs to his own abandoned – and often debated – musical legacy. In which case, Walker has chosen well. Jarvis Cocker and his accomplices take a similar pleasure as the young Walker in manipulating pop to melodramatic extremes and simultaneously weighing it with intellectual resonances. But where Walker homaged Ingmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal*, Pulp's one overt nod to cinema is the title "Whickman". Here, though, the group are at their very best. Taking a vivid journey through the decayed landmarks of Sheffield, they uncover the traditions and myths that provide an urban correlative to pagan ritual, like a regular, tedious pump out a viaduct on the way home from the pub.

There's use of rural imagery to put a new spin on Cocker's shrewd documentation of life in his hometown is a dominant trope on Pulp. The underlying sentiments of "Wishaphs" and "Common People" return entangled in the extended botanical metaphor of the temic opening "Weeds". It's also one of two tracks (the closing "Sunrise" is the other) where guitarist Mark Webster, the group's most fervent aviator, propels Pulp towards a kind of blasting space rock that recalls Spiritualized. Throughout, he acts as an agent provocateur, deep inside Pulp songs, smothering the initially straightforward pop of "I Love Life" with quaking distortion, or producing a slyly Krautrock ripple beneath the gamblong "Bob Lind".

The absence of frantically electronics a little surprising, given Cocker's and bassist Steve Mackay's close ties to L. Morozov and Barry 7 from Add N to X. But Pulp formally exploits its kinship with Scott Walker, right down to making him the butt of its jokes. In "Bad Cover Version", Cocker denounces various anti-consumers in his life, one of which is "The second side of 'Til The Bard Comes In'". Some might say that reminding their producer of the album where he barely nurtured songwriting passion visibly pained out midway through a little insensitive, if not somewhat childish. Except you can't help thinking Walker must agree with them wholeheartedly.

CLAUDIO PUNTIN & GERDUR GUNNARSDOTTIR YLIR

ECM 1794 CD
BY ANDY HAMILTON

Icelandic violinist Gerdur Gunnarsdottir comes from a classical background, playing with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and Ensemble Modern. As well as working in similar contexts, her Swiss partner Claudio Puntin has played with Hermann Plessner, Fred Frith and Dave Liebman – he also has a parallel career as

jewellery designer and goldsmith. But both partners resist any obvious pigeonholing.

His acoustic duo with bassline and bass saxist Stoffer Schom reveals Puntin is capable of locking horns. But the partnership here on *Ylir* (Icelandic for winter) is non-combative. The album is described as a "musical topography" of Iceland. Gunnarsdottir's keening violin sets the tone with the bleak theme of the title track, then plays a drone-based accompaniment while her partner elaborates on it, raising the music briefly to mythological eeriness. She contributes to mass voicing on "Haines", where the use of a whole tone scale sets up currents of modernism at odds with the album's appearance of gentle and affecting, folk-inspired music. On "Each Little Step", Gunnarsdottir sings a text by Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness in a setting by John Nodal, a member of the Darmstadt circle of the late 50s who was strongly influenced by Icelandic folk music. They also drop a fast interlude and the album's mostly slow tracks, with the rhythmically insistent violin and bass clarinet unison on "Hysimind" ("Gailop"), in this duo's unusual configuration, the Icelandic *Ylir* is a unique and haunting experience.

BOB RAINEY & GREG KELLEY

NMPERIGN
SELECTION SHS 009 CD

SIGNS OF LIFE

SPRING GARDEN MUSIC SCGM010 CD

DOUBLE DOUBLE

SPRING GARDEN MUSIC SCGM009 CD

BY DAVID KEITHAN

The music of Bob Rainey and Greg Kelley, aka Boston's Nmpign, is filled with a screaming silence. Its quiet depth is totally enveloping, restraining you to the slightest sound. Their respective instruments, soprano and trumpet, amplify their breath and lip movements in such minute detail that the resulting balloon textures, long electric tones and little symphonies of wind often make for quietly disturbing listening. Nmpign rarely take themselves to a whisper, but when they do it sounds volcanic, with the two suddenly rising towards each other from out of the blackness.

In endurance for going on 20 years now, the Spring Garden Music label was first birthed to document Philadelphia saxophonist Jack Wright's many collaborations and solo recordings. Anyone who got to hear Wright's great solo disc, *Free Life Singing*, from a few years back was floored by his lusty, primitive technique. *Signs Of Life* pairs Wright with Bob Rainey, and also features contributions from clarinetist Matt Ingalls and trumpeter Jon Oll. A live recording from their March 2000 tour, the sparse yet intense set combines the explosive shadings of The Spontaneous Music Ensemble with minimalist detail. You can hear the reed vibrates vibrate as they collide and less in mid-air, all brassy music. Oll himself describes it as "like a kitten being born in a shoebox. In a dark closet." On *Double Double* Rainey and Wright play with cellists Fred Lorberg-Helm and Bob Marsh. The slow gnarly scrape of the twin cellos draw the duo out of the shadows somewhat, encouraging Wright to

blow some dusty lines while Ratney sucks up big hyperinflated gaps. The tiny, explosive stars Ratney and Wright take into the depths of sound consciousness with their various projects have produced some of the most idiosyncratic and challenging 'jazz' you're likely to hear.

THE SCAVENGER QUARTET WHISTLING FOR LEFTOVERS SNOOWH/PHONOTIC NO NUMBER CD BY KETH C THOMPSON

The Scavenger Quartet are Doug Gaurley on drums, Tim Holmes on tenor and soprano saxes, bassist Joel Peterson and Frank Pahl on a list of instruments too long to mention. Pahl (see *Bites*, The Wire 208) makes musical instruments, many of them automated or at least semi-automated. For example he makes

girlfriends from lawn-up propane gas cylinders and has made an automatic marmosa with beehives made from plastic Trivertons. All of the compositions are by Pahl and they display a wonderful diversity of approach and derringed for convention.

To describe Whistling For Leftovers as quirky may suggest a slight, novel music, which this most certainly is not. Much of it is rhythmically complex and tonally challenging. "Leftovers" sounds like an odd concoction of free jazz, Western steel guitar and mockabilly, while "The Penrose Side Of True Arquette" and the aptly titled "Odium Waltz" are deceptively complex in construction. The latter is the high part of the CD. At most 16 minutes, it meanders through fractured waltz times and languid rubato passages, while at the four minute mark, it introduces a base that is hauntingly simple.

BOGDAN RACZYNSKI MYLWEOLOVE REPHUSE CATTIES CD BY JOHN MUEVEY

Polish is, for the most part, anathema to the UK community. The naked confessional is something to be abandoned as concert, an exemplar of pre-revolutionary decadence. One that sits it, in fact, with electronic's implicit conviction that music can make profound connections because of (rather than in spite of) the removal of messy personal detailing from the equation. A Pole currently based in Canada, Bogdan Raczynski has always been one to buck the rules. His personality has always loomed large in a portentously erotic career, with his pinging, howling and splenic drill 'n' bass songs moving from primitivism to other vocal catharsis.

Marking a new level of salacious even for Raczynski, Mylweolove is programmed, at least in part, to discomfort his devotees more than ones. The CD shows scenes larded with blatant signifiers: Raczynski lying naked, with his best vulnerable puppy face aimed direct at the camera; the 17 tracks are all carefully titled "Mylweolove" in his best childlike handwriting.

Even for those willing to indulge him, it may be a little too much to stomach. But the music within amply justifies his crude, 'look at me' tactics. Raczynski takes the playground melodies popular with many of his contemporaries, fragments them, distorts them and then sings tentatively over them. Claiming it's music for "crying and loving" leaves the listener unsure how naive or disingenuous some of Mylweolove really is. Nevertheless, its half-frustrated air gives it a striking air of spontaneity, allowing

Size Matters 3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Always/Joe Potts split single (Organ Of Cuts 27 7") comes as part of a package with a CD, but that's no reason to back off from this reissue of a 1977 Los Angeles Free Music Society 45, recorded by Potts with vocals by Vezia. One much of the best material from that collective, Always's music is a crude concoction, combining a musique concrète approach with garage postmodernism in a way that is really distinctive. Looped rockism and muddy found sounds bang around in the ether, while Vezia works herself up like a Martha Velaz automation slught in an electrical storm. Bodacious.

Art Ensemble Of Kongo are a mysterious New Zealand trio whose sound is a truly demoted attack on the precepts of Captain Beefheart's Magic Band. Their *The Right Furniture Explosion* (Truly Fine Citizen TRF #8 lathe-cut 7") recalls some of the things that Pelt have done in live performance, but it really has a wage and weed all its own, as additional titles "Everybody's A Money Expert" and "Yung Fu Savings" bear out. It sounds a lot like that legendary robbin of monkeys figuring out. Trust Mask Replica in bits and pieces. Who have dazed guess that such success would be theirs?

The Duo-DeeDoo's *Phonix On A Frozen River* (Organ Of Cuts 29 7") is another one of those deals where you are forced to buy a CD just to get the single, but hey - it's a good one. Here, The Duo-DeeDoo's are featured in their early line-up of Tom Reichen, Juan Gomez, Fredrik Nilsson, Dennis Duck and Rick Potts during a tune from *Phonix IV* for a fashion show in Passadena in 1978. They do such a fine and groovy job holding their own and extending the songs basic riff that listeners can only sit and wonder how those models must have prinked. Imagine.

Swilling Lacuna are a German duo whose Cheap Oxygens For Diverse Science EP (Dome 0647 7") couples two nice pieces of assemblage for guitar, drumheads and tapes. Without resorting to beats, they create distinct,

haunting landscapes. One appears to be a deserted street in a South American jungle town, down which they're puking a set of chattering dentures on a string. The other finds the pair inside a big globe trying to direct polar bears with base sounds. It works for me.

Rissa Breaks are a young female group from San Francisco who combine the musical bang-grunt of Mylweolove with the rivarly stung shouting of early Rough Trade outfits such as Kleenex and The Raincoats. Reports are that they're ferocious live and the wonderful plunk of their great guitar, Cat And Canary (Inclement Press & Recordings JW001 7") is guaranteed to make listeners keen for more. An album is due soon, but this will certainly do for now.

New Zealander Aulav Galtbrath's *Orbitol* (Crowlapse SPACED007 7") is not brand new, but it took a while to track down. Galtbrath is one of the best known and most talented artists to emerge from the first Flying Nun era, and this 7" is a fine addition to his discography. The A-side moves with the dark menace of what prime era John Cale might have added to *Emo's New Core*. The *Warm Jets The B-side* "Head Soup Dream From The Empire" is even simpler, letting the whispered vocals claw their way through a lattice of backwards guitars in a way that suggests something momentous is going on right around the corner. A beautiful record for the dead centre of the night.

Bayo-based guitarist **Naoki Miyamoto** has some connection with the Asahi Motosu Temple crowd, but sleuthing has turned up very little solid information. As the title says, *Live At 20000V 01* (Public Eyezone 23 7") was recorded live and features pretty dizzying waves of solo guitar rale with occasional vocal purges. It owed to the early solo work of Kaji Hara. It will not collapse under the heavy mantle of brotherhood.

Taking of all things brotherly, **Magnal and Barde Pond** split a special 10" between them, (*Matador 03E22 10"*), which was only sold on

their joint tour. The Mogue songs, "D To E" and "Drum Machine", are pretty beautiful in a light, gaily way and are precisely what their titles imply. Barde Pond offer "Despite The Roar (In Spite Of Themselves) Alternate Take", one of their sweeter folk-based compositions that runs headfirst into a wall of 'little deaths'. They follow that with "Highlands", a slow crawl through a sparsely lit space cavern. And another tour is wrapped up.

New Robot Theory are an instrumental offshoot of legendary sub-wave pioneers BMRX, and the untitled song (Nothing Fancy Just Music no number zero-sided 7") constitutes the first single are a bit less forcefully fueled than their parent group's more sowe. Indeed, they have a strange charm all their own. The basic premise seems to be the reconstruction of early 24 artist Lucy Mercer Desclova's ideas, as handled by extreme lo-fi monkeypops all sugared up on something real Southern. "Jim On The Move", my black ass.

Perturbations are an Italian folk group who sound something like Howl Castle in a certain mood. Latestness *Of My Biological Clock* (Jorcen Family JFR09 7") is sweet jangle of acoustic guitar, interspersed with electric leads and languid vocals. They split the single with *Stance* with *Stiff Giacomo's* *Fortune Eyes*. The *Stance* and future leader of Howl Castle, Giacomo here fronts the cleaner pop stylings of *Stance*. After the extreme ache and comic confusion of *Stiffness's* recent releases, this is surprisingly upful. It almost sounds like one of Ric Merck's groups. Classicist, but snubbed.

Once again, anyone who wants **Joe Potts's** *Mother/Daughter* (Organ Of Cuts 28 7") must buy a CD in order to get this reissue of a new LP/MS single, but such is life. Originally issued in 77, the Potts track is another fine collusion with Vezia. Rock as rock is forced into the pit of experimentation and we all gain winners. This time the single is split with **Siley Adonai** and **The Patients**. The Residents, when Chip Chaprin takes a nice pore at the gate Eyeballs from 444 Grove Street (as) it was able to again with "Under My Gun". At times, its wide almost points in the direction of *Heart Diamond*, and if you're not fine, well, what's?

VIA's *Perfect Strangers/976 Repercutor* (Scotch & Sniff Entertainment SNE011 7") is more difficult to decode pleasure from the

depths of the Michigan underground - already home to such genre leechers as Universal Indians, Wolf Eyes, et al. The music is somewhat electronic, and there are something like beats present at times, but the results remain completely non-offensive by sounding like some junkyard American reaction to the first Normal 45 or something. One can only guess that the coughy snarl in *Kalamazoo* is even stronger than that found in *Heaven*.

UK-based electro duo **Flash** take *Four Ties* and jumpstart and paste approach and stamp all over it with some totally squelching machinery. On *Amuse* (Advance Recordings EP004 12" + 7") they sound a little like a cartoon *Robocop*, sprouting the MS before skidding to a halt, shrub stunts, toytrain drum 'n' bass rhythms. **Nagla Ni** are an epic pop-psych duo from Osaka, whose music ran deep into the Japanese underground. They were formed in 92 by multi-instrumentalist Shinya Shibayama and his partner Masako Iweda after Shibayama split from The Hallelujahs, a great melancholy folk outfit whose solo LP has been released on CD by PSE. Shibayama also has connections with Maher Shalal Hash Baz, having played as part of the group and naming *OD*, the label responsible for Maher's sprawling *Return Visit To Rock Mass* box set. They (*Geographic* GEDG10 7") is a taster for Geographic's forthcoming Shibayama retrospective, *Songs For A Simple Moment*, and it's an absolute monster. Starting off with the most unassuming acoustic tinkering, it explodes in a technicolor wash of acid guitar, massed vocals and stoic percussion, fracturing authentic Beatle folk out into the stratosphere. The B-side is an otherwise unavailable take of "Me, On The Beach", from Nagla's 1995 *On The Love Beach* album, this time with Masako on vocals and an extra crunching coda.

As an easy rule of thumb, the quality of a record can be inversely measured against the prior pretentious of the packaging. Folded into four mainly black panels, **Stephen Jones's** 1985-2001 (*Amber 001 3 333* CD) certainly looks stupidly gorgeous. Indeed, you could press the set off as a replacement do-it-yourself for your gift, who might well get over his over-the-top gift that is 24 ultra-mood pieces as shallow as his cover and Jane's Babybird he that financed it. Reviewed by Byron Coley and David Keenan

The Compiler

New compilations reviewed, rated, reviled

Ever since the first shepherd heard two lute or horn players from distant hills in different directions, there must have been an inkling that music's line was to become a spatial art." So says the whimsical Kyle Gass, *New Music* critic of the Village Voice in his note to *InnerAsian* (Skarsden S2010 DVD) which contains 14 works especially commissioned to show off the possibilities of surround sound. Gass argues that Belizor, Mahler, Ives, Cage and Stockhausen all experimented with placing instruments either offstage or around the concert hall and the composers here are using their technological savvy to produce a state of the art spatial music. The difference is that Belizor and the rest had something of substance to say and their interest in spatial effects grew out of their overall philosophical approach. Although some of these pieces create an intriguing atmosphere (Lukas Ligeti's Propeller Island) and others are charming (Paul Dolden's Twilight Dance and Phil Kline's The Husatonic At Henry Street), much of the project feels woefully lightweight. Given the potential of the superior technology there's nothing to really amaze the ears and certainly not a hint of the wonderful idealism that inspired the likes of Ives and Cage. Surround sound itself is a mere effect and can't rescue pieces that are weak conceptually and aesthetically. Immersion may be a ringing endorsement for technology, but what happened to art? Well, at least they didn't take advantage of a DVD Audio's capacity to store eight and half hours of music.

Out of all the software we use to play our music, none is as problematic as the original cylinder. While you can't beat a 1908 Edison Standard photograph for authenticity, what comes out of the horn is usually wobbly and erratic, susceptible to every falter of the machine. 28 precious cylinder recordings – by many of the most important British music hall performers of the period, starting with Phil Ray's "The Wolf Of The Coon Singer" in 1903 and getting as far as George Formby Senior's "At The

Cake Walk Last Night" (1911) – are collected on *Gene Where They Don't Play Billiards* (Cyclidisc 501 CD). Most cylinder transfers, to either LP or CD, have hitherto sounded little better than an inefficient dubbing. Here, though, Dominic Corbett has done an amazing job, smoothing out inconsistencies of speed and getting a beautiful, ringing tone out of most of the originals. It's only when you have a photograph that you realise why the early players were called "talking machines": they really seem to speak to you, and that immediacy, which frightened many of our ancestors, is hallowed in this remastering. If you want to know where British popular music began, long before jazz and dance music, then you need to study this material, most of which was already being described as "popular songs". There are character comedians like Will Evans and Sam Mayo, quickfire patter from the incomparable Mark Sanden, patriotic belters like Hamilton Hill; the peerless male impersonator Vesta Tilley; dialect players such as Jack Pearsants and Ben Lawes; the burnt-ork eccentric singer GH Chivers; and a genuine black performer, Pete Hampton. Harry Champion's superb "I Pity Myself, I Do" needs to be heard to be believed, detailing his troubles with his friend's wife's wooden leg and a bottle of hair restorer. Tony Barker, Britain's leading music hall collector-historian, has given us an invaluable treat with this first release on Cyclidisc, with more promised for the future.

Hopefully, there are no more obscure Brit. rephodisc releases promised for the future. *Acid Drugs, Spontacid & Flying Saucers* (EMI 535078 4XCD), compiled by the Mayo team, is the same old tired collection of wee gets in floppy hats biding their time until they could unveil their Bach chops and still get laid for it, and multinational capital would pay for their tax retreat in the Bahamas. You know the deal: church organs, orally Mollatores, And James harmony on top of reared lute, floppy guitar leads, phased nasal vocals, skipping girls serenading female druids with bee whistles. That said, there's some pretty good snarl from The

Fives and The Sorrows, but the best part of this ridiculously over-long release is the last song, Sam Gopal's "Escalator". Sam Gopal may have been the Malaysian-born leader of the group, but "Escalator" is notable for the presence of Ian Wilks, perhaps better known as Lemmy Kilmister, who wrote and sang this splendid piece of agro psych with tables. Motivated scholars should track this down for the first instance of Lemmy's "born to lose" schtick. "If you think you like me (don't baby/you're gonna love me when I'm dead" Howled out your heart out.

The Three Angels: Original Beat Poetry (BBE 858601 CD) chronicles the last meeting of Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky and Gregory Corso in May 1992. While Corso sounds like he's degenerating before your ears, Orlovsky is in sparkling form, full of New York charm as he recounts tales of jacking off on his cat and cleaning up its vomit. Ginsberg, of course, is his usual soft-spoken, self-deprecating self, waiting to be carried off to "the worm farm". BBE is a label that specialises in funk and hip-hop releases, so the spare setting, with no new beats meet the original Beats' bullsh*t, is to be commended.

Based in a converted Tokyo taxi depot, DeLuxe doubles up as a studio for architects, designers, DJs and a beer company, plus an event space for exhibitions, parties and concerts. It's a small enough space but over the last two years or so has become semi-legendary for its series of improvised music gigs, impressively curated by luto player Brett Lerner and friends. *DeLuxe Impromptu Series Vols 1 & 2* (ASGE/ASGE2 2XCD) are live documents from 2000 and 2001 respectively and cover a phenomenal range of styles, from a dervish sax workout by Evan Parker to Sachio M and Toshiyuki Nakamura's 'nothings there' minimalism on Vol 1. The highlights of Vol 2 include Carl Stone, Richard Teitelbaum, Yoshitake Ono, Elliott Sharp and Taku Sugimoto.

If I Said Kanye's Beef Classic (1997) was HipHop's Nuggets and last year's Egg Tep's Big Airback was its Pebbles, then *Harvive World: The Sound Of The Big Apple Rapstar* (Heroes &

Willams press CD) is HipHop's Back From The Grave Vol 1. Compiled by BritPop producer Mark B. Harvive World collects some of the most platters from way, way back in the day, records that Afrika Bambaataa himself probably hasn't even heard. While nothing here really extends the Old School format beyond Grandmaster Flash or Spoonie Gee, the personality and joie de vivre are the equal of anything on Sugarhill or Erny Harvive World Crew (with DJ Jekky and Mr Hyde on the mix) comment on the Iranian hostage crisis on "Rappers Convention"; TJ Swanik's "And You Know That" lives up to its legendary status on the collector's scene shooter, double disc, DJ Jekky and Mr Hyde, under their own name, rock Bob James's "Nautilus" break on "Doing The Do"; the ultra-obscure Rappercat 5 talk about how reliable their rapper Rappercat is; and nadio DJ Mr Magic gets loose over a funk solo before Grandmaster Flash And The Furious Five sampled Freedom's "Get Up And Dance".

As with most histories, the history of the accordion has largely ignored the role played by women, according to Gilles Fordman's sleeve notes for *Les As Du Musette: Accordions Au Pinchik* (Paris Jazz Corner Productions PJC22007 CD). The suitcasebox compilation that settles the score was curated by Dominic Davis, ringleader of Les Pinchiks Du Futur. Sporting cover art by fellow Pinchik, expatriate cartoonist R Crumb, its contents are down in part upon the latter's 78 rpm collection *Les As* – encompasses a range of music, from Raymond Scott's whimsy to paradoxical jazz recalling the Hot Club Of Paris. The jauntyness of union lines shared by Simone Balbaud's accordion and her sylvan accompaniment, below the skill required to negotiate the hapier curves of melodies such as "Belelele" and "Parlons D'Espagne". These women are unfiled in their unabashed love of free-feed melodies, their carefully preserved recordings "wowing" the memory of a time when... the accordion did not have to be excused"... Reviewed by Philip Clark, Richard Cook, David Elliott, Richard Henderson and Peter Shapiro

A Deluxe Impromptu from Taku Sugimoto



Raczynski to get away with his dithering vocals and lyrics.

Better yet are the tracks where nostalgia filters through, with Raczynski tentatively employing the phantoms of folk music—live accordions and trumpets, chiefly—to score his shifting, unstable pieces. The emotional content is all the more powerful for being less overwrought, as he fashions steady turn rhythms to tap into a collective, possibly unreliable memory of Eastern Europe.

SCORES

WHOLLY OTHER WORK CD

BY BEN BORTHWICK

Hailing from Austin, Texas, Scores are Heather and Christina, both on voice, chord organ and bells. The parallel instrumentalists should tell you something about the nature of their music. The two long droning improvisations making up this release date back to 1996, and have been re-edited "to thicken the dense aural fog evoked therein". The first track, "Holding", opens with a series of sustained chords that bring to mind the mystical minimalism of John Tavener. It is difficult to disassociate the chord organ from a religious context, which, presumably, is one of its attractions for Scores. The deeply meditative and drawn out music aspires to the kind of focused inner awareness that has been the domain of religious observance down the centuries. 16 minutes in, the arrangement thus to just one chord, the introduction of a second heightens the concentration. Sung chords add texture to the drones, which begin to modulate, lose stability and then recede. Each recurrence of the pattern causes a minor shift, and by the 25th minute, the music's tenor has been transformed from the meditative to the secular "Breathing Threads" opens with a very different set of vibrations, sounding like an accordion group warming up. The resonances fall into sync, ebbing and flowing in short, shallow breaths. After a few minutes of tuning my breathing to its rhythms I felt myself entering a state of oxygen deprivation, which may explain its lapse into force halfway through, when the twinkling of bells starts up over heavy organ, and Heather and Christina warble like hysterical ghosts from a 1930s horror movie. Eventually the piece breaks down to just the voices, then which point it can never recover.

MARCUS SCHMICKLER

PARAM

A-MUSIK ADD CD

BY CHRIS SHARP

The kind of people who like to trace the proliferating pseudonyms of German electronics no doubt feel a frisson of excitement at unmasking like this one, which sees the Cologne-based composer and social collaborator Marcus Schmickler making a rare outing under the name on his birth certificate. In recent years, Schmickler has recorded Ambient work as Plasmam (with Jan St. Werner and Jak Uebertan, amongst others), and assigned dialogue as Waid Sati and Sator Rokus, as well as taking up membership of the conceptual electroacoustic Impro collective Mimes (alongside Rafael Rali, Christian Fenneste and Keith Rowe, amongst others). He has also continued an interest in the more

formal composition springing from his academic background in contemporary music. Param collects various recordings of Schmickler's "classical" works from 1996-2000. For the most part, it reveals a stately organisational austerity which bears little resemblance to the relatively benign, drifting cadences of Plasmam.

Included are pieces for pipe organ, voices and chamber ensembles of varying line-ups and textural complexity. While some also involve a judicious measure of electronic enhancement, others rely solely on Schmickler's scoring and the acoustic of the performance space for their considerable dynamic impact. For instance, the tectonic titled AS/N (constituting the CD's centrepiece) stretches with almost unbearable patience across 15 minutes of freight silence, as the music's lengthy dissonances—plucked hesitantly from piano, violin, cello, trumpet, tube and accordion—build with unerring precision to a remarkable pitch of tension. Schmickler's music is nothing if not minimal. The opening Aftan (for pipe organ) is little more than a fluctuating low-register drone, but it has so much with the redemptive repetition of Riley, Glass, et al. It's closer to a fusion of the eerie atonality of the second Viennese school (his music is suffused with a palpable central European bleakness) and the mournful sparseness of Morton Feldman or Earle Brown.

Which is not to say that Schmickler's compositions lack colour or drama. The plunging piano chord and burning strings that open Fried Krieger are as propulsive as a thriller score, while the rising, quivering motion of 22 Gliders, for string quartet and electronics, is as incredibly intense as it is wildly exhilarating. For all its obliqueness, and its wilfully unattractive packaging, Param is a trove of sonic daring.

THE SILVER MT ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND BORN INTO TROUBLE AS THE SPARKS FLY CUPERTINO CONSTITUTION CD17

SET FIRE TO FLAMES SINGS REIGN REBUILDER

BY JOHN MURPHY

Writing in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, the vision of a burning world perpetuated by the Godspeed You Black Emperor! camp suddenly has an unhappy presence. Here, once again, are two related projects characterised by a familiar emotional arc: beginning in desolation, cataloguing thwarted opportunities and failures and, finally, finding one last tiny, just-about-unquestionable fragment of belief in the human spirit.

Here, the guitarist and guiding force behind the newly expanded, six-piece Silver Mt Zion crew, is the most strident architect of this worldview. He's the one who ties hardest to articulate the profane anguish behind Hotel 2 Tongue-related projects, who ventures to put into words the sadness and disgust his music expresses so eloquently. The first Mt Zion album, *He Has Left Us Alone But Shatters Of Light*. Sometimes Grace The Corner Of Our Rooms, was

only intermittently successful—a chamber reduction of Godspeed's widescreen broil with a few parched lyrics.

But Born Into Trouble... is far superior, beginning with the beautifully written, justifiably confused seditionary pamphlet included in the package, characteristically titled, "On The Failure Of One Small Community In Achieving Its Own Ill-Defined Dreams And/Or Goals". Yet, for all its title, this is hardly subtle music. After the strident crescendos of "Take These Hands And Throw Them In The River", with Ethnik's panicked howl about "top cars in every corner", there's a long interval of birdsong. At times, when the usual solemn string passages have unwound, they lay bare some strangely conventional rock songs, with the vocals often resembling Neil Young or Built To Spill's Doug Martsch. One wishes for a more concrete signpost and the odd soloist rather than so many tortured admissions of failure. But the perverse uplift these musicians are frequently capable of has never been better showcased than on "C'mon Come On (Loose An Endless Longing)". With its horn voluntary and a guitar shriek recalling Kevin Shields at his most vitriolic, it makes a lunge towards the light.

Set Fire To Flames brings together 13 players from the Montreal scene (minus Elton but with most of Godspeed), alongside members of Fly Pan Am, Hanged Up and more) compiled by Godspeed! guitarist David Bryant. Few days of intense composition, improvisation and field recording (Bryant calls this "audio faking"), a compulsion "not to record shit" were, unusually for this analogue collective, processed and edited on computer to produce *Sings Reign Rebuilder*. Again, it's impossible to hear Set Fire To Flames without thinking of Godspeed!, particularly on the slowly monumental "Shriek-Glenn Of The New Town Planning", a wordless attack on Montreal's urban regeneration that inspires so much horror from the group.

For the most part, though, the bells of musicians are exceptionally talented at making themselves scarce. There's a ghostly ambience to many of the pieces, with static guitar atmospheres curling over urban chatter, crackle and distant machine grind. In common with both Godspeed's aesthetic and Ethnik's bombards instead, *Sings Reign Rebuilder* conveys a sense of being part of the world but disconnected from it. Potent forces in isolation, for sure, but perhaps what makes their parent group so compelling is the collision of dislocated melancholy and nightmarish indignation.

TERRE THAEMLUZ OH, NO! IT'S RUBATO—PIANO INTERPRETATIONS OF DEVO MILE PLATEAU MP100 CD

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Despite their fratty-like shenanigans and pranks, Devo and their De-evolution schtick, perhaps more than anyone else, represented new wave's emancipation of pop music. You can say what you like about all the British post-Bowie pretty boys, but they were really only earlier versions of US late 60s/early 70s Metal boys who wore their Mom's make-up to get the girls. Devo followed Suicide's creation of garage rock's Farthest threat, and made it even more trebly, more stunted, more nasal (ie straight out of the



MT - BETWEEN GAPS BEN BORTHWICK CD
Another in a series of releases from the Austin, Texas-based duo of Heather and Christina, this CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.



ADULT BEN BORTHWICK CD
This CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.



TERRA 2001 DEVO CD
This CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.



TYPICAL CATS - TYPICAL CATS (GALAXY) LP
This CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.



EYING A SHAM DEVO CD
This CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.



OH, NO! IT'S RUBATO DEVO CD
This CD is a collection of recordings from 1996-2000. It features a mix of live and studio recordings, with a focus on the accordion and voice.

The Boomerang

New reissues rated on the rebound



It's a Rap: Radio Birdman

An album dedicated to **Annette Peacock** has to be a worthwhile undertaking, especially if it features her own compositions performed by players who know her and her music as intimately as former husbands Paul Blei and Gary Peacock clearly do. Annette (Hatology 564 CD) was actually inspired by trumpeter Franz Kögner, who brought the pianist and bassist together for this 1992 live session. The material, which includes "Touching," "Cartoon" and "Mister Joy," may have been a cornerstone of Blei's repertoire over the years, but the album does not simply meet expectations. It's quite sparse, rather eclectic and even low key, but repeated listening brings the group and the compositions into sharper focus and it doesn't seem too fanciful to suggest that it reveals something of the mercurial personality of the woman behind the veil on the cover.

Emerging during the industrial tape boom of the early-80s, Milwaukee's F/I worked the dark depths of powerhouse electronics before a mass epiphany turned the whole group bongobards. Space Mantra (London DevLXD/EV001 CD) bundles their second album from 1988, originally released on RPRrecords, with their untitled debut platina, a split LP with fellow nosedive Soy Dnt Car. Space Mantra's ultra-printive combination of gab stambling, riffs, garbled vocals and tape art still sounds totally startling, like The Fall at their most Faustian, but there were even better things up ahead, as guitarist/vocalist Richard Franks split to form the monstrous **Vocokesh**. Taking their name from Abba 'lbor' Kesh who produced the first Blue Cheer album, Franks's new group took the F/I mission statement even further, barking black bile jams from just one chub before leaning to pierce with some frenzied odd punk stomp. Ipepeabara (LXD/EV002 CD) catches them at a bloodied peak, pairing their 1990 debut with the side of a split LP with F/I from 92.

Australia's **Radio Birdman** were named after a misheard line from The Stooges' "1970" and masterminded by ex-Exotrot rocker guitarist Garry Tek. The Essential Radio Birdman (Sub Pop SP053 CD) charts their beautiful nosedive from 1974-78, including the whole of their debut LP: Racks Appes, and the cream of the Bum My Eye EP and the lost album, Living Eyes. Despite their Gutter Army ethos and sage trading routine, Birdman were much more Back in the USA than Kick Out the Jams and they had a killer pop sensibility, as highlighted on great piano-led ballads like "Breaks My Heart" and "Love Kills," the latter of which could almost pass for The E Street Band or The Doors. Elsewhere there are great high energy workouts like "New Race" and "What Gives?", plus their couch potato tribute to Hawaii Pre-O, "Aloha Stevie & Olanio." Still, "Descent Into the Mausoleum" remains their masterpiece, all late night urban terror cut with blizzards of confrontational guitar noise.

On its original release in 1992, one discerning German magazine dismissed **Uta Carben's** *Pro De Janeiro* (Quaternoss Q5114 CD) as "not music," which is recommendation enough to give her Moog-heavy brand of exotica and electronic Latin rhythms a second listen. Recorded partly in Costa Rica and with Uwe Schmidt (aka Atom Heart) as executive programmer, this swinging mélange of sambas and moogs knows how to mix the familiar with the strange and rough synthesized toms with smooth effects, even cooing some sweet cocktail picking from Pete Namlook on Gibson guitar.

The encounter between rock and traditional African musics has not been fortuitous, generally because of rock's tendency to use Africa's delectable rhythmic patterns as exotic colouration. But Cream's drummer **Ginger Baker** has always focused on playing rather than image. In the early 70s, he lived in Nigeria to learn more about drumming. His appears paid off with African Force (RMO-Magnum TR007 CD), recorded live in Cologne and at a studio in

Isoriko some time in the 80s. With this group Baker managed to combine the ominous intervals of heavy rock with the in your face impact of tribal drumming. The cover photo—a horse in a sunsoaked savannah exits gran from a trailer, coils of orange plastic piping to the fore—shows a real Africa seldom glimpsed by the pop imaginary. So too the music.

Winston "Honey The Obscure" **Haines** never quite seems to get the full credit he deserves as a producer. Yet his long career includes presiding over some of great moments of 1970s reggae. His productions are marked by a beautiful clarity, granite-hard rhythms and an abiding love for melody. Microphone Attack 1974-78 (Blood & Fire 84737 CD) is given over to 60 material produced by Haines, with crack microphone experts named to unmissable backing tracks. There are vocals by some of the top exponents of the genre—U Roy, Big Youth, Delanger and Ranking Trevor—but the star of the show is undoubtedly I Roy, who is in superb form on tracks such as the lead "Sister Maggie Brown," "Native Land" and the stately "Jah Come Here". His humour is often pointed. "Come Road Spunking" has him riding the backing track to Gregory Isaacs' "Slavemaster", introducing the tune as a cockney tourist looking for prostitutes in the vicinity of an Internet camp during the state of emergency that prevailed at the time.

With his usual blasé sense of humour **Jeha Fehey** probably would have dismissed his own "rediscovery" the same way he lampooned the slowness of the 50s/60s folk revival. The rest of us, though, can simply be thankful that Ae continue to re-release the catalogue of his old Takoma label. Originally recorded in 1967, *Days Have Gone By* (TAKOMA TAE6509 CD) may not be as famous the Blind Joe Death albums, but it still finds Fehey following an utterly idiosyncratic path: covering Steubius, transporting Roy Auld to Valhalla, dedicating acoustic ballads to cement factories, creating acoustic raga dub and

generally finding more in a seemingly exhausted tradition than anyone has a right to.

Originally released in 1991, Accelerator (Jupiter's & Pansy's PROMO CD) finds **The Future Sound of London** desperately trying to find a way out of the Hardcore moment. While still dominated by those itchy, trebly drums, rubbery synth lines and jerky dynamics, Accelerator attempts to take you out of the student bedsit and into the wire bar. The production values are a definite step up from Hardcore's cheap and cheerful dionysos, with a bottom end aiming to cushion you like a bucket seat. There are a couple of post-industrial alienation numbers to be sure, but the exotic touches on "Moscow" and cocaine chill of "It's Not My Problem" bring it closer to American Psycho territory than the withdrawal of their later records, when their stated aim was to make "impotent music." Of course, the album suffers badly from the problem that brights nearly all recent electronic music: it dates faster than unrelentingly brie in the black hole of Calcutta, even the once rather remarkable "Papa New Guinea". The accompanying CD with ten remixes doesn't help matters any.

Hard to believe that the same **Wil Malone** who was the drummer for two psychedelics Orange Bicycle and who later played strings for Seal, The Verve and Simple Minds (Massive Attack and Neneh Cherry too) is behind the moody and rather excellent soundtrack of *Death Line* (Spinney SPINNEY052 CD). The movie starred Christopher Lee and Donald Pleasance and concerned a tribe of sub-humans who lived in the London Underground and survived by eating human flesh. The main theme is in typically early 70s style, but with swinging strings replacing horns and a monstrous, thunderous Moog line occupying all of the bottom end. Listen to this and marvel: Google Street Station will never be the same again. □ Reviewed by Julian Cowley, Ken Hollings, David Keenan, Will Montgomery, Peter Shapiro and Ben Watson

head cavity rather than from the guts), more sexual than, of course, there were their fabulous deconstructions of 'authentic' macho classics like The Rolling Stones' "I Can Get No Satisfaction," Johnny Rivers' "Secret Agent Man," Los Dorsey's "Working In A Coal Mine" (aside from its slightly dodgy Annes "TV Andy caricature) and The Carter Family's "I Was A Woman Man," that coaxed any hint of funk and replaced the pungent aroma of sex with an almost clinical sterility.

Yank yuks it may all very well have been, but their catchphrase "Are we not men? We are Devo," with its echoes of the island of Dr Moreau, struck a chord among America's freaks in the bleak late 70s. Combined with the alienated synopses of Jerry Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh, this links them to a tradition of deviant electronic music that runs roughly from Walter Wendy Carlos through Sylvester to Tene Thematic. It's no wonder, then, that the Devo Theatre has chosen Devo to follow Kraftwerk and Gary Numan in the Roboto series of piano reinterpretations of electronic classics.

As with so much 'conceptual' stuff, however, a great idea on paper is a letdown in the actual performance. If you're as familiar with Devo as many Americans of my generation, it's wildly amusing to hear the opening chords of "Rock Horse" banged out on a Steinway, otherwise it's just so much Windham Hill. Elsewhere, even utterly recognizable tunes like "Whip It" and "Morgelore" are so decontextualised and 'clevered' here that the point and the humour is totally lost. Unfortunately, neither spuds nor spudettes will find much satisfaction here.

**TO ROCOCO ROT
KÖLNER BRETT**
STAUBGOLD 22 CD

**TO ROCOCO ROT
& I-SOUND
PANTONE EP**
CITY SLANG 201443 CD
BY DAVID KEENEHAN

Kölner Brett is a cheerily functional temple on Cologne's cityscape, a building designed by the architects bba+ last year. The structure was split into 12 separate units combining both living and working spaces. There's a heavy zinc austerity to the rooms and from the outside it looks like a huge modernist showpiece, as grim as a public library from the early 70s. During Archibol, an architectural exhibition held in May 2001, the German trio To Rococo Rot presented a 'musical

translation' of the Kölner Brett, now available on CD on Staubgold. Consisting of 12 three minute compositions, *Kölner Brett* reflects the building's architectural grid. It's an attempt to raise a phantasm structure that mirrors the building, while 'sounding' the individual atmospheres of the living and working quarters. It's an unqualified success, like the building itself, Kölner Brett is minimal, tactile and highly regulated, all conveyor belt rhythms and microwave pings. It relates more to bassist Stefan Schneider's solo work as Mapzobator, only even more austere. While To Rococo Rot's own records soundtrack the organic urban throb at the heart of the modern city, this feels a lot more desolate, like lonely broadcasts from the edge of town. The Pantone EP furthers their collaboration with New York DJ I-Sound. Recorded after their joint tour, it contains reworkings of material from Kölner Brett, and of "Partone" and "The Trance Of Tawel" from this year's *Musik Is A Hungry Ghost LP* plus two new releases taken from the original LP sessions. "Partone (Red)" is particularly striking, with new layers unveiled beneath blurry, tapey electronics, while a beautiful keyboard refrain echoes Kraftwerk's trans-European beats.

**TROUM
TJUKURRA (PART 1:
HARMONIES)**
TRANSGRANTED TRIP CD
BY ANDI CHARPUE

"Tjukurpa" is one of many native Australian words translated as "dreamtime" without nearly getting its meaning. These two musicians from Bremen use the word to bolster their idea of music "as the direct path to the unconsciousness, searching for the archaic 'essence' of the human being". Between 1988 and 1996 they were part of Ambient Industrial guitar trio Master TG. As *Traum*, they use guitar, bass, accordion, wordless vocal and a great deal of echo. They apply the latter to great effect on the calming and beautiful *Tjukurpa*. The first of a projected trilogy, this one's dedicated to 'harmony', with 'trone' and 'pulsion' sets to follow. Their sound is a hovering cloud of echoes, fringed with trebly electronic distortion. Slow and steady folk melodies emerge from the tonal fog, often in counterpoint. With each new tone forming a chord with the echo of its predecessor, *Traum*'s music has somewhere between My Bloody Valentine and Klaus Schulze and an eternal loop.

**ROGER VAN LUNTEREN
TM-EINS**
HEIMLEKTO LEM HEIM COUP
BYRON BORTHOVICK

Surprisingly for an artist who has previously released his Euro electronics on such labels as City Centre Offices, Pension and Duplelante, the opening bars of *Trance*, originally a 12" that first appeared in 1999, now issued for the first time on CD with bonus tracks, have the hollow acoustics of an early Art Blakey session, full of shimmering hi-hats, double bass and spontaneous mutterings. When thick bass and electronic strings wash over the beats, "Sif" takes on a Kruder & Dorfmeister lilt. The drums occupy a distant backdrop, then push forward at the breakdown, and drop back again in a game of hide and seek that runs through the whole album. Halfway through, the genre misrecognition takes a radical turn as it slips into the simple staggered chords of an early Acid House breakdown, hands in the air style, which is incorporated into the rest of the track's matrix. Each of these genres is already over-determined, but Van Lunteren's arrangement brings them together in untheorised and productive ways. If "Sif" is the closest, most 'jazz' of the *Trance* tracks, the others are still excellent tales of down tempo dance and Ambient. "Path" moves in the direction of more straight ahead dance, as layers of beats, strings and a surging bassline unravel over ten minutes, while "Water" and "Crytic" develop the Ambient routes hinted at earlier. But "Float (Full Length Version)" is the one that goes all the way back to the early 90s Ambient heyday, when Manuel Göttschicks's *E2-E4* linked in every groove. The track slowly builds a series of phases, from the course of its 37 minutes, transpires from cosmic drift to edgy Ambient House and back again, phasing in and out of distortion the more heavily processed and abstracted it gets.

**VARIOUS
TELLUS TOOLS**
HARVESTWORKS TELUS 3XLP
BY HUA HSU

Given its timing and my present location - Cambridge, Massachusetts, with the deafening sound of an American jet fighter destroying the clearest blue noon of the year - it's impossible not to try to contextualise this release. Right now, noise - driven in all ungloomy shades of colour and misshape, diving, propelling itself of reedifying rhythm and pure, bludgeoning sound

that is devoid of emotion - feels like the only place to find stable meaning. For 'air' - much less wrong about it - is hardly up to expressing catastrophe. While it's not the sound of protest, however. But the US do remind me of the relationship between sound and real life.

TeLLus was created in 1983 by Joseph Nechazal, Carol Parkinson and Claudia Gould as a way to disseminate the soundworks of forward thinking artists near and far. The audio magazine started off as a bi-monthly cassette publication collecting poetry, music, drama, news and performances, eventually 'inviting' onto compact disc in the mid-1990s. Around the time of issue 3, TeLLus began adopting 'new' themes' for each issue. While some were fairly obvious ("10 "Guitars", "13 "Power Electronics"), others charmed conceptualists more ambitious as the soundscapes themselves ("22 "False Phenomena", "25 "Site-Sense Sounds").

At not, the TeLLus mission emboldens us to really think about sound and experience. Not only does TeLLus T00 Series as a retrospective for the magazine's output, it also affords listeners a chance to participate. The two pieces of vinyl are exactly the same and allow them to flip the turntables to 'mix' them. The brief battle beats section is handsome artifice; run the tapes on their sucker disks with shattering glass, mouth nap and palm-frames. Whereas the traditional hat of the turntable is that of rhythm snatcher and groove seeker, TeLLus's double LP foray prefers that you do it yourself. Perhaps another possibility would be to issue the series on tape and allow buyers to cut and paste. In part of the experience, but not expect it to sound pretty. The vinyl 'grooves' start with Nicolas Collins's "Devil's Music", a simply clambering cold crush cacophony. The excerpt here is raw and aggressive without viciously drawing blood, a punch of slabbied rhythm with the taped edges showing. Collins's accidental hardcore was peaced together live at New York's ABC Nello club in 1986. Stealing radio broadcasts occurring during his set, it is surprisingly fluid and rhythmic despite its spontaneity. Try and parse the radio voice hags and you'll catch a bad one. Christian Marclay's "Groove" is great. Recorded in 1987, it was one of his first encounters with a professional studio. The skips loop and a simple beauty emerges from the pre-Muse swarm of crude noise.

An excerpt from WBAI reminds us that HipHop was once too small for its own branches. A six minute snippet from Isaac Jackson's Messages

Ravine Life "metal electronics" (Sleep 06) September 2001

David Winking UK film maker / digital artist Chris Smith was known for his film work on musicians such as Scanner for the South Bank Show, in step between films at the mouth of eachers. His first album introduces some solo works, and besides some collaborations with Moby, Tim Lincecum, Future Pilot 01s, and artists from labels such as HipHop (Jah), Red (Frygg), Jack Sparrow, Devo, etc. - you'd've ever been put on hold, you'd know that the time they play down the telephone. It is a work of informationism that is with Chris. smooth movements. Ravine Life has been journeying through the modern, speaking in electronic tongues, sounding sounds that flow from being immersed in electronic field, right through to using things that would make any audio mind to unravel. Enhanced CD features a short movie by Chris Smith.

RP-HiPp Generation v.6 (Sleep 06) September 2001

34 minutes in a 6 page BigBang. Just very few moments from a series which has quickly become the centre of a lot of attention in recent months. 16 exclusive songs by: Mica Calz / Si-cot / Si-cot / Brunch / W. Pier / Cmy / Twine

si-cot dot: enthusiast (Sleep 07) November 2001

A major proportion of the sounds are samples of woodwork melons, different thunders, burning processes, shavings, guitars, yfattered pieces, contact miles on unground surfaces, acoustic instrument such as piano, flute with microphones to create a rhythmic complex in twos of glit and organic sounds. Similarly different shaves and finishes the grass on the wood becoming slowly the grooves of a vinyl record, spreading forward. The music speaks for itself. <http://www.enthusiast.net/~enthusiast/>



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Soundcheck

radio show in 1982 captures young rap still stretching into its own skin and raring out knies — simultaneously provincial and futuristic, noisy and tight, avant garde yet joyous. Rammellzee and Jean Michel Basquiat show up with forgotten soldiers A-One, Tox and Chuck Armiter Kool. Ram sounds like a prophecy right now, rumormongering his secret knowledge of "mythical rhythms": "Sound cannot represent the actual letters themselves." Ram's throwaway guess might as well be the blueprint for the whole *Yellow Bells* project, if not the relationship between sound and fury that haunts today. What comes first, the word or the sound? Are words mere sounds themselves? Or do we make sound to approach language, or to explore new languages?

Kiki Smith's "Life Wants To Live" writhes, fakes, pulls down bookshelves, whoops and coughs, and a tollable heart attack lets you know that something is wrong. The liner notes indicate that this 1983 recording comes straight from the stage and addresses the brutality of domestic violence. Consisting of a fight between Smith and fellow artist David Wojanowicz, "Life..." is one of those pieces that relies heavily on pose and context. Alison Knowles' "Nivea Cream Piece" from 1962 operates similarly with its stunts and wet saps. The experience of what actually happens ends up going blind in hand with the resulting sound itself, understanding of one leads the other. You had to be there. In some cases, though, thank God you weren't.

DAVID S WARE QUARTET CORRIDORS & PARALLELS AUM CDDITY AUM101 CD

LIVE IN THE NETHERLANDS
SPARCUS CDH85 3 CD
BY DAVID KIDMAN

Tenorist David S Ware's first post-Columbia recording is as exhilarating as it is expensiveness. Pianist Matthew Shipe's switch to Kong synthesizer opens up all sorts of interesting areas, lending the quartet a depth of field and an analogic-pushing ferocity which has them taking bloodied lumps from jazz's bleated corpse while making all sorts of surprising and intuitive links in *Corridors* and *Parallels* you can hear beating echoes of various outdoor storms — the cosmic music of German keyboardist Klaus Schulze circa *Black Dances*, the busy echoes of psychedelic Canterbury even some metallic industrial klang —

but, inevitably, there's a trade-off. While nothing jars with the synth sounds themselves, which range from bubbling electronic gloop through sustained, chorale-like lines, Shipe feels less integrated than he usually is, and those moments when he used to burst all over the melody with big tumbling runs are pretty much gone.

However, it's the leader Ware who goes AWOL on the album's untitled intro section. Bassist William Parker and drummer Guillermo E Brown lay down a solid groove while Shipe smirks little swarms of electronics, and Ware comes online and the quartet hit "Straight Talk." The first three minutes are taken up with a jittery Shipe soloing on a really spazzy organ that brings to mind too many mid-70s concept albums to really work. As soon as Ware enters — forceful and barking instructions — Shipe bows out, only to return for a bit of broken jangling in the dying moments. "Jazz Fi-Sol" falls similarly short, with the trio's high energy wrestling frustratingly brought to a regular dead stop by Shipe's babbling synth. "Superpassage" works better. A troupe of drum machines, augmented by Brown, summons huge wet clouds while Ware freestyles around them. The title track is gorgeous, with Shipe constructing a towering, evangelical synth part, while Parker bowed bass creates some great circular movement to bolster Ware's some wilder teasing. As ever, they close with an Ayler-like solo-off. "Mother May You Rest In Bliss." The odd synth lasso reconfiguring Ware's first post-Columbia recording leaves the strongest impression that he's pushing on to the realization of a future jazz vision. Some of it is a little clumsy and faltering, but nobody else is, apart from maybe drummer William Hooker, who's something of a quiet life.

Ware's sole set, *Live in the Netherlands*, is something else altogether. It's a total evaporation of the tenor that starts with some obsessive Sonny Rollins-like single note runs before erupting into some of his blondest, most physically affecting playing, all rendered at the speed of thought. This kind of beautifully blurred motion meant to lightning electronics would be the real prize.

STEPHAN WITTEWIT STREAMS GROB 393 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY
This is the Swiss guitarist's first solo album for Grob, though other work has appeared on both

Intuit and FMR. The credits say, "music made with guitar and devices, later on processed and modulated." The restructuring and assemblage work done on the eight compositions gives the album an 'after the event' feel, but this does not detract from the equally strong sense of an agenda fulfilled. The manipulation of sound, combined with Witte's guitar technique, is absolutely devoid of cliché. With an attention to actual detail bordering the obsessive, he practices a constant development of mood that makes for intense listening.

The singly created through juxtapositions within the sonic depths of field is maintained by the element of surprise. Witte generates background collages of subterranean rumble, built out of myriad pulses and signals. These exquisite constructions allow time to accommodate to their alien configurations. He will then precisely position a delicate acoustic guitar finger hammer on a detuned string in the sonic foreground, the dislocation and familiarity of which makes you re-evaluate the whole elaborate framework. Sounds are explored and given time to reveal their other, hidden selves, contained within their underbelies and complementary resonances. This textural metamorphosis suddenly refines back to a purely struck naked guitar note, growing into a moment of sustained feedback. The effect is highly charged and leads to moments of singular purity created out of adulterated density. At one point, the clatter of fingers on strings grows to the intensity of a typing pool, highlighting Witte's ability to emphasise the mechanics of guitar playing, counterbalancing it with the dispassionate of sound that the instrument can equally create: the identifiable and the abstract held in perfect tension. Only in the last piece, "Bounce", is there a recognisable sense of sleepcatcher. The rest is all upcoming current tagging at the process of sonic formless immersed in the soundpool.

JAH WOBBLE & BILL LASWELL RADIOXIAM: A DUB TRANSMISSION AXIOMMUM PICTURES 39793 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY
Laswell describes Radoxiam as an "after broadcast" attempting to capture the feeling of encountering "traces of a lost future". Forget the transcendentalism and concentrate on the endorsement of earthly goods. The album's subtitle is "Bass The Final Frontier" and Laswell's

ongoing mission is to disseminate the dub aesthetic well beyond the neutral zone. The plectrifying, trance-inducing, twin bass attack of Laswell and Jah Wobble rearranges the sensibilities at a molecular level throughout, providing the low-end warp to the combined and interlocking percussive weight of Karsh Kale, Hamid Drake (drums and tabla), Sly Dunbar (drums) and Ayo Dering (percussion). Points of groove reference here would be Laswell's own *Like Beat Machine* and *Mysteries Of Creation*, or Wobble's *Heaven And Earth*.

We have grown so used to this eclectic mix of styles (Jah, jazz fusion, African and Jamaican rhythms combined with an Ambient subtext) that it is easy to forget just how brilliant Laswell is at holding disparate combinations in suspension, fusing the material with the precise temperature required for complete cohesion, and intersecting the right complementary sound at just the right moment. Anna Claudine Meyers' giddy funk organ break on "Second Sight", for instance, is a perfect example of this seemingly instinctual ability, recalling her work on Laswell's and James Blood Ulmer's Third Rail South Delta Space Age.

Nicky Skopelitis adds understated and echo laden guitar spasms (sounding like a refugee from the Making rather than the Mississippi Delta on "Dial") and the bubble-sugar combination of Egypthor and Tigist Shobbar provides East African vocalise on two tracks ("Rumba Dub" and "Warm Dub") that is reminiscent of Laswell's recent work with Phronk Sanders. This is not to suggest that Radoxiam lacks originality, merely that it demonstrates a formidable level of qualitative continuity with the other work mentioned.

The point of departure from the Laswell blueprint comes in the shape of Nils Petter Molvær on trumpet and Graham Haynes on cornet. The dozen of the remix school, Molvær is allowed to flow unimpeded throughout, his breathy, ethereal tone imparting itself like a watermark or fine paper. The combination of tones between the trumpet and cornet are inspirational. Only on "Virus B", Laswell's homage to electric period Miles Davis, does Molvær's tone adopt an obvious patchy blend of Davis and, peculiarly, Jan Hassell. Like this is the sincerest form of flattery.

What Wobble and Laswell also achieve here is the feeling of a group that plays together in real time, making instant contributions through the application of flesh and blood rather than post-produced and deconstructed digital impulses. □

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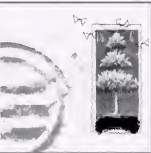
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Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

BABY DEE LITTLE WINDOW DURTRO 055 CD

Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, singer-composer Baby Dee made her way to Manhattan where she held down a job as a waitress in a bear costume in Central Park. After becoming obsessed by the devotional music of Palestine and Gregorian chant she landed a job as an organist at a Catholic church in the Bronx. "Having exposed myself to so much of the music of truth I finally reaped the consequences and was forced to face the truth about myself," she explained. "That I was/am one of those strange and exotic creatures that the people of our time call transsexuals. It's a thing that I don't pretend to understand." Little Window is Baby Dee's first release. Antony of Ourto artists Antony And The Johnsons, has described Dee as his muse. While they both share a similar emotional intensity and sense of drama, Dee's music — mostly just vocal and piano — feels much freer, more open to hurt. "What About My Father?", a song to Dee's sibling dad, is a rawly honest sweet highlight, especially when she slides skilfully into a verse from "You Are My Sunshine".

BRAIN DONOR LOVE PACE & FUCK IMPREGNIO JUPLOCD0003 CD

Brain Donor is Milla Goe's latest concept: a power trio that mixes the sociopathic teenage adrenalin of Kiss and Montrose with the black hole brutality of Musica Transire and Blue Cheer. Coqs are on bass and vocals, while one Nevlar plays "coruscation" and Dogman manages with the lead guitar. The titles are a list of stroked Mel Pretty Face — "See Saw Me Coming", "Get Off Your Prothy Face" — and Coep's intuitive grasp of the many schools of Metal music is pretty obvious, from Genia Simmons style witchcraft through to the satanic fetterles of LA glam. Coqs runs the gamut of growl. There's even a conceptual "hell" halfway through, "Gidin's Gift to His Mother", which starts off with "Therme From 'Speed Kills'", an eye-wormingly beautiful stop/start riff that speaks of the glorious teenage utopia we missed out on. Still, Coep's inherent pop sensibility means that some of the tracks are just too artfully melodic to qualify as Metal feed. Somewhere within "Get Off Your Prothy Face" lurks the sugary psychodelia of World Skut Your Mouth — and that's no bad thing.

NEIL CAMPBELL THE HEARING FORCE OF THE HUMANIVERSE HENCHING HUMANIVERSE RECORDS PH033 CD-R

Fencing Flaxman have been doing a great job of documenting the shadowy underbelly of the UK's improv scene, not least the activities of multi-instrumentalist Neil Campbell, who also leads The Vibracathedral Orchestra. The Hearing Force Of The Humaniverse, despite being a tentative pun on Albert Ayler's Music Is The Healing Force Of The Universe is a great overview of many of Campbell's working strategies. The opening "Caldar Rising Blending Neverending" is the sound of celestial bells, flickering in and out of

phase as distant nursery rhyme melodies twinkle in the background. "Moose Flowers" sounds uncannily like its title, too, homily oscillating electronic currents bloom and squeak at each other like deranged fidgetspinners. Best of all is "Police Bathroom Floor", where Campbell seamlessly integrates field recordings of dripping water and background noise with synths and bells creating an eerily stark landscape that really does go in.

HIGH RISE PSYCHOBOMB PBF PBF0124 CD

Psychobomb calls the cream of the live shows from High Rise's US trek last year, interspersing tracks from the I-Spy in Seattle and Tonic in New York as a follow-up to High Rise's previous live on PBF: it's a deal. Whereas the first live set was spoken at its intensity, with guitarists Murehina Nanta bleeding all over the rest of the group, here the fidelity just makes them sound completely flat. Without the clear crystal bite of Nanta's solos, High Rise are reduced to purring. "Ossoline" sounds like a dodgy Electric Prunes bootleg, with bassist Asahito Nanto's straight lift from The Poodles "You Never Had It Better" throbbing like a sore thumb. Only the closing "Psychopedic Speed Freaks" comes close to living up to its hyperbolic title. This feels like a stopgap release and a substantial one at that.

JUTOK KANEKO SOLO PBF PBF0124 CD

Jutok Kaneko is the shades and hair behind one of Japan's greatest heavy psychedelic groups, Kosekusa. Though they have been active since the 70s, they're criminally under-documented. Their first vinyl, album has long been out of print and their only other PBF release was a bit of character, as they tried to shuffle to accommodate guest saxophonist Masaochiro Ueno. Ray Night Live, on FoxPon Records, is the only recorded evidence of just how overpowering they could be with heavy blasts of strategically out of time chords going up against the most ludicrously lumbering rhythm section this side of Black Sabbath. While this solo release doesn't quite scale those heights, it's still a great document of a highly idiosyncratic musician. Although Kaneko's guitar is as crumpling and staggered as it gets with Kosekusa, here he's working with slightly more structured material. At points he almost comes across as a narcissist. Neil Young, nodding away just in time for some seriously damaged single note soloing. For a few tracks he's joined by White Heaven's Koji Shimura on drums and bassist Takao Nishimura, but he sounds best solo, barking out solos and turning the air purple with distortion.

LITTLE ANNIE DIAMONDS MADE OF GLASS STREAMELINE 1001 CD+LP

Little Annie aka Annie Anny has been a consistently provocative figure on the fringes of the underground for several decades now. She has worked with everyone from Adrian Howard

and Or-U Sound to Current 93 and CoL. On this new three track EP she hooks up with Joe Budocheizer of Backword! for a set of sensuous torch songs. The title track is a sultry hymn to immolating desire led by soft babbles, minimal piano and twinkle upright bass. Annie's voice sends out as many contradictory signals as Billie Holiday's, all beguiled baby doll and sater bells, punctuated with some kitchy Eartha Kitt-style tongue action. Featuring Budocheizer on guitar, "Lullaby" is much closer to the feel of Backword!'s records, a slice of kaleidoscopic acoustic pop that sounds almost like David Roback's Moxy Star. And Christoph Heermann provides a suitably haunted, slow motion mix of the title track.

MAN ARTUR LES DISCOURS DU SOLER ET DE L'ADICER COSAGAGA CD

Not the 70s Webb Quicksilver wannabes, this Man is an instrumental French duo featuring François Seyd and Charles Eric Charmier, previously of the free rock group Oris Lander. Recorded in late 1998, Artur started out as a series of organically extended sketches that left plenty of space for potential overblows. Yet in their still skeletal state the instrumentals seemed so eloquent and alive that the two decided to release the roughs as they were. The results straddle a fair few genres without setting down in any one of them for too long. Their vest palette utilises piano, guitar, bass, accordion, melodic and electronics. The slow-spooling, filmed feel of their instant compositions are underscored by the invisible choreography of Ennio Morricone or Nino Rota.

MARIANNE NOWOTNY MANNADE GIRL ABATON BOCK COMPANY ABATON005 2XCD

Mannade Girl is New Jersey teen queen Marianne Nowotny's second solo outing and it packs an even greater emotional punch than her debut, Abate Of Me. While the latter drew much of its emotional weight from its sensually dangled combination of hysterical time signatures, crack crackling keyboards and hormonal adrenaline, on Manna Girl Nowotny slows down and spreads out. While her voice is as sweetly demure as ever, her new compositions make more subtle use of atmospherics and textures, with the result that she comes across like a possessed fire and brimstone evangelist, preaching over ominous sex electronics. The second CD consists mostly of instrumentals, ranging from Peter Dinklage disruption through little preening sketches, only interrupted by the savage out and gasp decade of the title track. It ends with "Our Day Will Come", a simple harmonium driven hymn to whatever lies just past the horizon.

NOXAGT NOXAGT SYNTHETIC RECORDINGS SYNE004 CD

A wholly instrumental work, Noxagt is a singles collection by Norwegian noise master Erik O Brandstad, serving up a rich dash comprising

heavyhanded saw, samurai noise, trash Nazi and heavy blues, with nifty electronics filling the gaps. The 50 tracks here are compressed sketches and ideas rather than fully developed songs, all being held together by an (un)wieldy (depending on your point of view) fascination with avant-blast misadventure. Titles such as "Kronquag" ("Rumpquag"), "Ond Machine" ("Shit Machine"), "As Rumpum", "Heavy Vortex" and "Rapid As Movement" keep you wondering whether this is a sociological manifesto squinting on your CD player or just an explicit howler to The Butthole Saviors. Although there's some blatant cribbing going down here ("Hot Escort" is Menzies without the vocals, "As Tension" a bass-heavy Prunus pastiche), and a version of Europe's "The Final Countdown" (80s revivalists rejoice, if you dare), Noxagt is a refreshing ode to vivacious stoppiness with a deeply loved Off spirit. Try it at home kids. (Anne Alida Neust)

PIP PROUD A YELLOW FLOWER EMPEROR JONES EP3 CD

Pip Proud cut a couple of endearingly unclassifiable, vaguely folk-sounding records for PolyGram in Australia in the 90s, before some broken promises from John Peel and Apple records found him washed up homeless and hungry in London. As a direct result he quit making music — at least until he was "rediscovered" in the late 90s by Antipodean musicians like Alastair Galbraith and David Nicholls. Proud's vocals are certainly an acquired taste, sounding hopelessly withered and despairing and supported only by the skeletal creak of a severely abused guitar. His lyrics only heighten the suffocating sense of despair, with songs about abandonment, homelessness, divorce and sexual aggression. Although the great musics, including Galbraith, Nichols and Tom Carter of Chameleons, do attempt to let some light in, the whole set is so unerringly bleak as to be completely suffocating. The spark of hope that flickered all through his previous recordings appears to have been snuffed out.

PSYCHATONE RHONEDAKK KEEP ON PSYCHEDELIC MIND BLACK PLASTIC SOUND SB005 CD

Psychatone Rhonedakk is a lone American psych experimenter, very much in the tradition of private press luminaries like Simmons and ST Mikeas. Keep On Psychedelic Mind is Psychatone's sixth release to date and it's a tribute of sorts to his favourite psych groups, everyone from Hawkwind to The Godz to Acid Mothers Temple and The Acid Mothers' tribute, "Therme From Acid Mother Lovers" is particularly deserving, with tumbling electronics and high frequency flashes slowly giving way to swathes of wet sounds like Godzilla terrorising Nagoya. The CD moves from heavy machine and guitar interaction to spaced tape manipulations, out with dith hippy humor. He also throws in choice covers like The Godz's "Radio Eyes" and The 13th Floor Elevators' "May The Circle Remain Unbroken". □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

DI ABSTRACT/ GOLDSPOT PRODUCTIONS EAST COAST VS WEST COAST EP VINYL: 101 13"

DI ABSTRACT ALL MY TEARS VINYL: VROD01 13"

UK two-step label Vehicle looks State-side for its debut release, bringing in New York's Goldspot to letter up a jumpy boom-bap break with brash Batsuda-inspired percussion, while flanged keys nod west to Detroit techno, then East to London Tech House. Basically a perpetually shifting arrangement of four or five components, the track could use some development, but as for sheer sonic, it's easily as advanced as its 'hyphen' contemporaries in South London. San Francisco's DJ Abstract takes a leaner approach, pushing a single syncopated break through a mottled pair of wordless vocal flourishes, shadowy muffers and swirling, downbeat synths. It's almost unmythical, yet its focus makes it more successful than Goldspot's art and paste variations.

For the first release on San Francisco drum 'n' bass label, Green's two-step imprint Vene, Abstract sticks with his characteristic approach, depicting deranged chords andinky bass with the yearning vocal refrain of the title. In San Francisco, even the Junglists can't escape the House dia. The two mixes on the B-side roughen it up with reggaey vocal samples and a tightly wound breakbeat attack, a relatively unswerving headbanger that follows in DJ Zinc's footsteps along the perilous tightrope between funk and its polar opposite.

DARQWAN AS WE ENTER SOULFUL 002 12"

Back from the dead, old-school hardcore increasingly colonizes two-step and breaks, demonstrating once again how retro, like a virus, takes root in moments of aesthetic stagnation. Darqwan's "As We Enter," though, shows a way out of the nostalgic cul de sac. As a scuffling, minor key bassline and waver wave of snare triplets march on like zombies, chopped up vocals — a male danteal MC and female bops singer — open up cracks through which seep brilliant Detroit Techno drums, like a glimpse of the future. The flip's "Pip Drome" is paradoxically less utopian, but it's still a fine slice of electro breaks that blasts away the likes of MJ Cole the way the smart bomb cleans the screen in the arcade game Defender.

KIRK DEGIORGIO PRESENTS AS ONE PROBLEMS DISCOUTY URI2006 12"

Degiorgio fuses electro squelch with 70s soul on the vocal title track, but despite the free spirit feel of the lyrics, in its pursuit of a right angled funk it loses much of the fluid dynamism that's defined his best work. Stacey Pullen's remix of "Another Revolution," released in its original version on 10" in late summer, retains the

telescope colouring of its source, but sculpts Degiorgio's lumbering rhythms into something more floor filling. Pullen's growing keyboard additions make clear how much these two producers share in common. "If It Ain't Broke", exclusive to the 12", loops incessantly syncopated drums with hammered guitar harmonics and bumpy keyboards before sliding effortlessly into a House groove that grows and grows, thanks to Degiorgio's trademark Dp-Art pontilism.

MISSY ELLIOTT GET UR FREAK ON REMIXES COMBAT BOOTS NO NUMBER 12"

I'd been pining for a two-step remix of Missy Elliott's "Get Ur Freak On" so I was thrilled to find the American bootleg in the racks at a New York breakbeat emporium. If two-step's parasitic relationship with pop music has any benefits, it's that pop culture can be a conversation, legally sanctioned or not. Funny thing, though: since the original is basically at the 1/2" bass tempo, a two-step remix requires slowing it down by about a third, leaving Miss E sounding more like Lady Lada. The drum 'n' bass mix on the flip is an almost bizarrely obvious TechStep update. DJ C-Lay and DJ Hooker's admirably Garage "Boss Man" is even more plodding, and the Rick James "Superfreak" insertion is good for a laugh exactly once. Still, records like this, and the countless other "Get Ur Freak On" boots that have come out in the last few months, signal the restless irreverence that keeps pop culture interesting.

MORGAN GEIST SUPER ENHANCER ENW10 12"

In recent years New Jersey's Geist has updated his classic 80s Techno with the disco influences of the preceding it. For the latest release, he's even drawn inspiration, the disco vibe is still there, especially on the A-side, where vocuous, synthetic strings wash over stalling analogue keys and a surging bassline, but it's updated by a serious 80s fix. Just check the syn-drums and handclaps, the latter most likely sampled from Lawlie's new Order. On the flip, there's no doubt about the samples' provenance: "a reference to that ridiculous 80s chorused vox sound," in Geist's own words. But he fits them so effortlessly into his own spring funk, sparkling with cowbells and high end bliss, that the reference transcends itself — no mean feat.

HORSEPOWER PRODUCTIONS ELECTRO BASS TURN UP UR THROAT 12"

HORSEPOWER PRODUCTIONS GET OF FURY TEMPA 001 12"

In a reaction to the ubiquity of UK Garage a handful of two-step, breaks and Jungle producers have turned to darker, dubbler perennials of the form. But if the trajectory echoes the one writer Simon Reynolds described in his version of Jungle's descent into the red-

eyed, paranoid minimalism of TechStep, this new mutation sees some of those same players greatly expanding their sonic horizons. Witness Turn Up On, the two-step imprint of No U Turn's Nico Styles. South London trio Horsepower's two mixes here cross a jittery hi-hat rhythm with sweeping washes and dubby keyboard stabs, gurgling down in the mix. If Force Labs' MRI did two-step, it might sound like this. But the Horsepower trademark is the bass, on-beat and perfectly swung, an anarchy knocking from below. For Neil Jelliffe's Tempa label, they lighten their track considerably with ringing triangle and flute samples atop 'step in your tracks' syncopation, but when the bass erupts, the ice-encrusted high end dissolves in a puff of steam.

KYOTO JAZZ MASSIVE SUBSTREAM COMPOST 003 12"

De "Substream," the duo of Yoshihiro Oline and Shyei Dorian turn in a jazz, soul-voiced disco-House number that pretty well defines the direction Compost has been moving of late, veering gingerly close to a 70s American TV theme like *Quintuplets Love*. It's shiny, happy, playful, and, well, just a little too much — the kind of forced smile you shot that gets me off a dancefloor faster than a Texas DJ with a learner's permit. Fortunately, Altonaught's sense of 1999's "Eclipse" is much better, wrapping their after-layer of Latin percussion around a simple two-chord keyboard figure, a delicate balance between economy and excess.

MAX FRESH VS ICEBREAKER MELT/SOUR CREAM ZEIST 005/006 12"

Max Fresh, aka Haden Agender's Mark Goodings, teams up with Icebreaker (an augmented version of the Swiss group Sequel), but where previous Max Fresh recordings featured breakbeats with a ringing triple register, and Sequel have perfected their own brand of Deep (but brittle) House — both artists leaning you with strands in your hands and stans in your eyes — "Melt" trends more pedestrian terrain, relying on the slap bass funk and Fender Rhodes colouring that's become a Jaxxhouse trademark. It's not necessarily derivative, and it does forward with a lively energy, but it does feel as if the artists are taking a bit of a breather. "Sour Cream" is better, looking to the Motor City and Medwyn and Theo Parrish for the inspiration behind its languid disco.

SON OF SCIENTIST THEORY OF EVERYTHING MAIN SOURCE MUSIC 010 12"

IG Culture evidently reserves the Son Of Scientist alias for his very weirdest takes on avant funk and future soul. "Theory Of Everything" takes a vaguely Middle Eastern sample and loops it over a rolling, radically de- and re-composed breakbeat that pretty much defines the limits of the broken beat genre. Over this, soft string presets, late 80s rave stabs and still more analogue leads wind together in an intricate counterpoint, building and breaking down until

the song finishes out in a cacophonous climax of metal jazz. "Ice Steel" waxes a choppy BreakStep rhythm and mixes it in Detroit inspired chords before rubbing it down with Hoover bees and delicate insect effects. Yes, broken beat, the latest in an outpouring of virtual genres, is quickly blurring with whatever, and if the engineers aren't careful, the whole thing could easily go the way of Acid Jazz.

ULTRA LIVING FEATURING MIKE LADD PREPPY MC DEATH OF HIP HOP VOL 1 OZONE 02088457 CD

After Transgressions, last year's startling (and criminally underacknowledged) collection of stonk, tape loops, noise, post-rock and eroded HipHop, Japan's answer to Gaster Del Sol recruit The Infektions' Mike Ladd in a soundtrack designed to send all preppies, yuppies and the "black Brown University Mafia" diving for the subotoks on their Audis. Stunted preening against the track's sluttiness into before a chorus of blackless rips the world open and Ladd announces "All HipHop all manholes have been depressed", mulling the mundane seen as schlocky apocalyptic as Escape From New York. Ultra Living's unorthodox approach to sound and scene is stamped all over this, from the epic brass section smoulder to the way they open up pockets of empty space in the wall of sound. I'm not sure which is more dangerous, the crushing mass or the vacuum within. "The Rhythmic Immortal" is an even wider slice of electro clatter, shot through with squiggles of noise, barely controlled breakbeats and Ladd's vocals, which are dubbed to incompressibility. But a hell bent sub-bass propels it unflinchingly.

VARIOUS OMOA MUSIC SAMPLER ONE OMOA MUSIC NO NUMBER 12"

On his singles for Planet E and remixes for the likes of Brooks, Dan Cartier and Herbert, Derritz's Redhouse, aka Matt Cheshire, has proven himself a master of shuddering, feverishly melancholy avant House, almost like an American answer to Herbie House. The first release on his own Omoa Music label opens with Dapp (Chiroline plus Scott Zacharias) who build a delectably Herbie-style rhythm out of handclaps, whippers and unidentified thuds on a dub of "First Off". They smooth over the clatter with rounded belltones and open ended chords until a jagged analogue keyboard solo burns through to the surface. Marc Alphonse's "Contentment in Humidity" is a transparent collage of sampled fads, airy wail and tempo blast pressed over a blurred out bassline. It completely takes the category of "downwards" so "transcends that it should dispatch legions of noodies to the pawnshops to turn in their MP3s. On the flip, Ayro gives a configuration of offbeat drums and buzzing chords, forming the frame with an impassioned vocal delivery that verges on gospel. It's tracks like this, along with Ibor's work for Planet E, that suggest a fascinating affinity between the American Midwest and West London's Co-op crew. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

ALVA NOTO TRANSFORM MILLE PLATEAUX MP104 CD

Alva Noto is German electronic composer Constantin Nicolai, and this is his second album for label Plateaux. He's also contributed to both instalments of their *Clitics* - CDs series, which will come as no surprise to anyone who happens across *Transform*. As its soberly minimalist sleeve design and understated title-tracking - which simply reads "Module 1 - Module 10" - warn, this is regulation state-tech: asterning, prettine, post-gothic mummaging, taking his rhythmic cues from hip-hop and R&B, Nicolai studiously replaces their percussive elements with fleeting shards of digital flotsam. And behind these stately revolutions, shifting drones offer flickering hints of tonal colour. The surprise is that from time to time, like on "Module 4", these stately constructions border on the downright funky.

BROTHOMSTATES CLARO WATER WATERS CD

It's not really the done thing to comment on the commercial success of releases from artists who describe themselves, but the time-mangling records widely prevalent in Techno circles reaches new heights of absurdity here. At the age of 23, Lassi Nikki is the latest addition to the Warp roster, and we are told that his early experiments with PC sound-work took place in 1988. At which time he would have been ten years old. Apparently, he "spent the 90s researching audio-visual programming techniques". Unless the Finnish state curriculum is particularly flexible, this must have come as something of a surprise to his teachers, who no doubt thought he was practising his times tables. Biographical scepticism aside, Claro is an assured piece of work, which weaves complex, if fraught structures by tensing waypoints, softening sounds against a central, controlling pulse. Mostly using familiar Techno soundscapes, Brothomstates succeeds in producing a new generation successor to Artificial Intelligence era benchmarks like B12's *ElectroSense*.

DONNACHA COSTELLO TOGETHER IS THE NEW ALONE MILLE PLATEAUX MP104 CD

If a title like *Together Is The New Alone* isn't enough, the individual track names serve to underscore the suspicion that either (a) the minimalist aesthetic has found its way into the realm of electronics; or (b) the Dublin-based Donnacha Costello doesn't get out much. Expectations are confounded, though, by the revelation that "That Empty Feeling", "Nothing, Still Nothing" and, Lord help us, "Dry Kitch" aren't, in fact, doctored exercises in self-pity but instead lawlessly paid and sweetly contemplative sketches of slowly unfurling ambience. Subtle melodic and textural touches abound; sounds are softened through the mix wreathed in soft distortion, and, for all its immaculate digital clarity, *Together*, and the new Alone is an intimate and involving gem.

ELECTRIC BIRDS PANORAMA DELUXE RECORDS DUX010 CD

In which label boss Mike Martinez of the Seattle-based Deluxe Records turns artist for his second album in Electric Birds. As his chosen monitor suggests, Martinez is on a mission to fuse the technological and the organic, and he succeeds in imbuing his digital sound material with an uncanny warmth. In this, *Panorama* is a distant descendant of a work like David Tudor's *Rainforest*. But, far from forbidding, these eight tracks reference House-era Ambient types like The Inesistible Force and the hygroscopic warmth of MBV as much as Oval or Plavalorn. Those with highly sensitive New Age alarm systems might take issue, but for the rest of us, *Panorama*'s redemptive charm will do just fine.

FAD GADGET THE BEST OF FAD GADGET MILLE MUTE/PLP 2XCD

According to legend, Fad Gadget, aka Frank Tovey, began his musical career in a brogue cupboard in a high rose curtain flat in Fulham. He would disappear into this small space, where he slowly assembled his repertoire, using a budget synthesiser and a drum machine stacked on an ironing board. Fad's scolded-sharp electronic pop forwarded a real alternative to such late 70s/early 80s lyndy electronic-pop mannequins as The Human League and Gary Numan. For one, his approach was more experimental and confrontational. Songs like "Back to Nature" and "Ricky's Hand" led somewhere between Raw Power Iggy, "Model" era Kraftwerk and Neu!, producing a brave new beat that effectively and ingeniously reactivated the fading cacophony of punk by pushing it out on to the dance floor. This double disc celebration of Fad's finest moments includes a batch of 12" remixes, excellent sleeve notes by former NME writer Paul Morley and booklet photos, by Anton Corbijn, of the man's many startling theatrical transformations. (Edwin Pootley)

JENDREIKO PLANETEN SUITE FLESH FLESH-104 CD

The frankly bizarre work of one man, his guitar and his Pinky and Perky Kloner, Planeten Suite is as far removed from the somber majesty of Gustav Holst as you could get to. Over a dubious assembly of sub-George Benson pieces for solo jazz guitar, Jendrekko (by day a member of the German Hobbyepopeum-art collective) intones a succession of froaky, scot-infected waltzes, employing throughout some of the more arcane settings on his vocoder. Should you care, the theme of these warblings appears to be the cosmic loneliness of the astronaut, although the exact detail is admittedly lost in the non-German speaker. To these ears the resulting perfection is terrible, but at least it's terrible in a comparatively original way. If you have a sufficiently jaded musical palate, it might just be strange enough to float your boat.

JETONE ULTRAMARIN FORCE INC FM105 CD/EP

Montreal-based Tim Hecker is, we are told, a graduate student in critical theory. Fair not, though, in his debut album, which follows 12" releases on the years of Pitchfork and Fat Cat. Hecker eschews Tenebris-style theoretical manoeuvres in favour of good old-fashioned, strangled-down techno. Hecker offers up 12 tracks of militant spaciousness - inchoate textures swirling around the central pulse of a well-managed 4/4 kickdrum - which will no doubt appeal to acolytes of the minimalist creed. Others may find it a little dull, although the formal sleekness and unwavering motion of a track like "Phoedra" is captivating enough to place Jetone at the head of his chosen field.

MARKANT INFORM MARKANT NO NUMBER CD

Surfing from the deepest recesses of the digital underground and docked out in an altitudinal dove grey, this self-released album comes as an exercise of a modest string of 12" releases bearing the same name. Subjective as it is, *Inform*'s intriguing anonymity is only part of the appeal - within lies an assembly of gently muscular techno that flows gracefully at one remove from the exigencies of the dancefloor. Markant's elegiac, melodic cadences unfold in unhurried procession, expanding through tracks that generally top the seven minute mark; and the composer takes full advantage of his spacious canvases throughout, introducing shimmering feedback and sipping chimera that resists obligingly alongside the muted rigour of his rhythm programming.

ROBERT NORMANDEAU SONARS HEPHEUSTE C118 CD

A connection between the electroacoustic academy and regions of more, uh, abstract phenomena of electronic composition is intriguingly made, but this bold move by Rephlex brings it out into the open. Licensed from the hallowed Canadian label Empreintes DIGITALes, which exists to document developments in electroacoustic and acoustic music, this collection by celebrated Quebecois composer Robert Normandeau is an object lesson in the infinite possibilities of sonic manipulation. Often using the simplest source material - much here is fashioned purely from the human voice - Normandeau conjures windstop soundscapes of thrilling complexity. His sparkling array of sharply delineated sonic events and immediate attention to spatial placement combine to produce music that effortlessly outgrows most grey-scale offerings from the laptop masses.

OVUCA WASTED SUNDAY REPHLEX C1110 CD

As you may know by now, Ovuca is the profits firm by way of Detroit, Alaska: Perik's, and this 22

track collection is a relatively restrained entry in a discography that has expanded to admit two previous albums (one single, one double) and an EP in the space of a couple of years. Ovuca's music is deceptive. Almost featureless on first encounter, close inspection reveals a refreshingly quietistic approach to tracks subtly populated by impenetrable sonic conundrums. Stay vocal fragments wander in and out of jump, chrome painted breakbeats. There are also snatches of mutant gamelan melody, and fleeting moments of resonant dubwise sensibility. Great if they are, nothing about these *Wasted* is ever staid.

SENKING SILENCER KARAKI KAIK KAIKI CD

Although the German electronics scene only rarely displays a tendency towards the boldly descriptive, the title of this release from one of its most industrious denizens fits the nail squarely on the head. A mini album - its six tracks clock in at just over 30 minutes - "Silenzer" is one of a slew of recent releases from the steady, more conventional Cologne producer Jens Kessel. And to his low and unimpressive rise in still pools of silence for his considerable impact. This is headphone music par excellence: cyclical and sparse, it's suffused with the opiated yet insistent sub-bass motion which primes Muzak's pessimist manoeuvres. There are hints of 2002 Jazz Funk Greats as TG meandered, but mostly this is hermetically sealed from the outside world.

SOLVENT SOLVENT CITY MORR MUSIC MORRUS003 CD

For its listener, the boundaries between Techno and techno-pop have always been volatile, but it's clear that a new generation of composer is gleefully blurring the lines. Thomas Morri's Berlin label, working with the likes of B&N and Nemesis & Kinn, has been instrumental in foregrounding melodic sweetness in electroacoustic music. Solvent City gives one step toward early Depeche Mode, Yazoo and Dave & The Human League. The project of Zimbatone-born, Toronto-based Jason Arm, Solvent waves rely one finger keyboard lines around dagger, not quite naive beauty - no vocals, though - and the results are nothing short of charming.

STILLUPSTPEYA STORIES PART FIVE RTORINELL RT134 CD

Icelandic renegades Stillupstpeya continue their twelfth, fractured, multidimensional assault on the conventions of electroacoustics with this limited edition outing. The high intensity cacophony of white noise is the key to its impact. It is by turns sparsely - flickering across barely coherent pieces like the opening "New Things To Pile Away For Ever" - and surgically administered - precision injected around the somber rhythmic certainty of "When I Was Eight Years Old". Stillupstpeya's music gives off the unmistakable whiff of the art laboratory previously occupied by The Hyster Trio and Nurse With Wound. □

Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

PEDRO AYALA EL MONARCA DEL ACORDEON ARHOLCO 1022 CD

With the lion's share of its contents drawn from two instrumental albums recorded in 1968 and 1973 for the El Paso and Falcon labels respectively, this compilation makes a convincing case for the lesser status of Pedro Ayala as the Maraca of Acordéon. Of course, to focus solely on his squeakybox virtuosity would be to deny the merits of the incredible drummers with whom he played, their slippery fills exuding the same wonderful anti-logic as reggae drumming. The full power of regional dances is on display here, from European imports such as polkas, mazurkas and valses to the huapangos and redovos local to the Mexican-American diaspora. Though Ayala was selfless in assisting other conjunto musicians to greater fame, he was best known in the border region for holding fast to his original style.

BONGA SWINGA SWINGA MILANES 9194 CD

"The Voice of Angola 102 per cent Live" boasts the subhead — and you can believe it, going by the crowd noise giving Bonga, an African singer-songwriter with strong Portuguese influences. Considerably more light-hearted and uptempo than his earlier altipop sets such as *Angola 72*, the CD could be Bonga's much needed handshake with the world at large. He covers enough stylistic ground to make World Music fans happy: zouk from Montique, Cape Verdean morna, samba and the obligatory trappings of reggae all colour his live set. He would not be the first African troubadour to nail against a colonial oppressor while delighting in the cultural residue left by the colonizers of his homeland. Still, for all his admirable aspect, Bonga is the voice of a gentle insurrectionist, a spiritual successor to the recently departed Francis Bebey.

CHINA CLASSICAL MUSIC CCORA C5020338 CD

Half of this selection of performances on guqin (zither), pipa (lute) and erhu (two-stringed fiddle), among various other instrumental staples of China's millennia-old composing traditions, was recorded circa 1900. Surprisingly for Qinqin, whose archival credentials are usually impeccable, it appears the CD was mastered from surviving but very vinyl LPs, to judge from the surface noise which makes many of these gossamer noctals. Still, such complaints must be measured against the myriad joys of hearing music whose microtonal Chinese extends to regulating the pulse of the listener through the fingertips of the player. "Yin-Yang Shan (On Mount Yin-Yang)" translates both a local landscape and the carnage of war into a solo for the two-stringed violin known as a gaozhai, the 1910 tape, with its chattering glass-like notes, nothing for sitting out most of the last century.

GRANDE COMORES SAMBE COMORES DIZIM 4508 CD

Dizim is the German label whose A&R focus is trained on Africa's south eastern coast and, in this case, its adjacent islands. In its best package to date, it cures five groups who represent "Modern traditions from Grande Comores." If they share the Arab-Indian hybrid influence of Zanzibar's band music, all of these groups also have a pleasing informality about their performances, as though they were playing at a backyard cocktail — an endearing quality in an era of prefabricated World Beat stars backed with Pansonic session players. The interplay between Hiyar Nouri's violin and electric guitar brings to mind a Tanzanian version of *The Five Royales*. Of the few pop tarab compilations to appear since John Storm Roberts's pioneering survey of this region in the 1980s, *Songs The Swahili Sing*, only Sambe Comores measures up to this pathbreaking anthology on grounds both of musical depth and unvarnished charm.

HSAING WAING ORCHESTRA MYANMAR: THE BURMESE HARP AUTONUM/SCOR 03281 2XCD

The cultural riches of the country formerly known as Burma have been derived to the rest of the world by discovise politics. Yet ace ethnographer Jacques Brunet has breached its protected borders to make a series of recordings of implicitly refined solo harp playing and larger ensemble performances, both of which are noteworthy for their intimacy and varied repertoire. Given that the documentation of Burmese music has hitherto been exhibited in the West only via Rick Hume's recordings on the Shanachie label, Brunet was obliged to cover a lot of ground in order to provide anything like an adequate overview. The gamelan-like sonorities of the Hsaing Waing Orchestra invite comparisons to Charles Ives at his most playful and chaotic, while the disc showcasing the music of the 13-stringed saung guik is charged with alluring mystery.

ALI HASSAN KUBAN REAL NUBIAN PRINANIA PHR1575 CD

Until his recent death Ali Hassan Kuban was the king of Cairo's Nubian wedding bands, a James Brown figure with a reputation for playing extravagant and endless sets. A relentless modernist, he declared traditional Nubian pentatonic modes with infusions of Western jazz and, like all pop innovators worth their salt, he was often damned for polluting the purity of his people's music. That the hush-into-out sounds as funky as a Holter claimed on an average Nubian wedding is but a fractional testament to his inextinguishable sound. As with every disc in his estimable oeuvre, *Real Nubian* is tough, danceable, ultra-romantic and — above all else — a whole heap of fun.

MASTER FIDDLERS OF DAGBON MASTER FIDDLERS OF DAGBON ROUNDER 0210158602 CD

An up-bet for the nascent World beat movement was John Miller Chemtso's *Almanac Rhythm*, African Sensibility, touted by David Byrne and Brian Eno in their press kit for *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. Though Chemtso's time in the media spotlight was brief, fortunately his enthusiasm endures for the Dagbamba musicians of Ghana, with whom he lived and studied. Like his earlier Rounder discs devoted to the sabbies of Dagbamba's talking drums, this survey of one-stringed fiddles (or goons) locates the listener dead centre of the action. Whether under the ostensible guise of prose songs or sung aphorisms, trance music in its most literal sense begins here.

OSMAN, GUBARA & CO IN THE KINGDOM OF THE LYRE INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE 321036037 2XCD

Though in danger of being superseded by the Arabac out, the indigenous lyre of Sudan has been the principal means of musical expression for Sudanese warriors and courtiers alike, dating back to biblical times. A sumptuously packaged and annotated two disc set, *Kingdom chronicles* four different approaches to this ancient, seemingly rudimentary instrument. Although the timbres of individual instruments vary, the preference for rapid strumming dominates, as the singers articulate Islamic melodies with razor sharp ornamentation. Only Muhammad Al-Badri, a Baga singer from near Port Sudan, shows the tempo to anything less than a drowsing man's heartbeat. Otherwise, here is folk music of a raw, nearly confrontational nature, sung by musicians who have had to adopt piercing, driflike voices in order to communicate in open spaces.

RAJASTHAN CHANTS DE PALAIS ET DE DESERTS WAGRAM 33069112 2XCD

This riveting music from the Indian subcontinental zone of Rajasthan has desert ambience galore trapped within every track. As the harmonium sets up its honeyed drone and the bowed sarang plays an oily counterpart, vocalists (men and women, protest cruel punishments, celebrate the singular qualities of young women and recount historical tales. Their songs embody the best qualities of diverse Indian and Pakistani styles, while steering free of any formal genre constraints. The torch singer intensity of qawwal, the fire-hair modulations of Hindustani classical technique, the full-bodied rhythms of Garosic song are all threads within the music's opulent weave. The commanding voice of Awariz Khan Mangharwar stands out, if only because most ordinary humans simply can't sustain notes that long and at such volume without bringing some form of life support into play.

TARAF DE HAÏDOUKS BAND OF GYPSIES NONESUCH/GRAMMÉ 795412 CD

For the uninitiated, the Romany group Taraf De Haïdouks might best be described as equal parts Jewish Klezmer orchestra and Looney Tunes cartoon soundtrack. On *Band Of Gypsies*, comprised from three concerts recorded in Bucharest last year, their crazy quack music is augmented by the guest appearances of the Kamen Orkestar Gyipsi Brass Band and the dabuka drumming of Tasi Tasyaglu (significant props to the clannishness who dared to follow the latter's solo on "A La Turk"). The booklet documents the picturesque goings on surrounding these homecoming shows: the ensemble's manager was set upon by a violent cab driver, its violinist escaped a beating from a jealous wife, and so on. Performed with fury and grace by shifless undesirables from the edge of town, this is rock 'n' roll as it should be.

TRINIDAD SHANGO, SHOULDER & OBEAH: SUPERNATURAL CALYPSO FROM TRINIDAD 1934-1940 ROUNDER 021011899 CD

Trinidad's great musical invention calypso is defined by its fusion of lively melody and arch wordplay. Add the iconography and attendant spiritual fervor of African religion, albeit in a syncretic form adapted by the New World's slave populations, and the results match the raucous energy of Appalachian revival tents. A selection of Spiritual Baptist (or Shouter) hymns form part of this disc. Previously, the Shouter sect's music was only available on a rare Folkways LP. Calypso veterans such as The Lion, The Carriacou and Lord Executioner weave staid tales, some describing Shango mis, set to distinctly Yemba tunes. Closest to the liturgy of Haiti's voodoo is the Trinidadian cult of obeah. Describing the manipulations of an island witch in a scenario resembling that of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," Winston Housley comes the term "regencyman." Wet and wild, start to finish.

VARIOUS GHOST WORLD OST SHANACHIE 8058 CD

Prior to directing *Ghost World*, his feature debut based on the Daniel Clowes comic, Terry Zwigoff was a documentarian with a musical bent, whose films include *Crumbs*, his notorious portrait of his fellow Cheap Suit Serenader, cartoonist R. Crumb. Zwigoff was his record collector's heart on his sleeve when assembling this soundtrack. Leading off with Mohammed Rafi's riffs on Bollywood hit "Jaan Pehechan Ho", he goes on to indulge his passion for rare blues recordings (Skip James, Joe Calcott, Robert Wilkins), the gritty pelt of 78 rpm discs very much in evidence. But the weirdly over-amplified Bluegrassmer are an odd choice. Whatever, this one sinker is more than compensated by the inclusion of several archival cuts from Lionel Belasco, the calypsonian equivalent of Duke Ellington. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

ARSONISTS DATE OF BIRTH

MATADOR/COLUMBIA CO

Musically, there isn't much difference between *Date Of Birth*, The Arsonists' second album, and their debut, *The World Burns*. After the latter's release in the autumn of 1999, the quartet was reduced to a trio with the departure of Freestyle and Q-Story. As a result, the new disc sounds more serious and determined than their whimsical, joke-laden debut. Both albums, however, share a disconcerting taste for cookie-cutter 'banging' beats and rah-rah choruses better suited for live performance than long players. On *Date Of Birth*, Jase, Swel 79 and Q-Unique prove themselves to be charismatic MCs with extensive vocabularies who trade microphones within the space of a single verse, dropping such gems on "What You Want?" as "I come from the other side like London city traffic/Make everyone turn ash and act as if I'm Ben Affleck." Q-Unique's production wails a fine line between mainstream savvy and underground aesthetics, often sounding buoyant while being barely audible.

What's lacking on *Date Of Birth*, though, is any sort of excitement. Throughout, they settle at limping labels like "Independent" or "mainstream," but it's the tension between those two musical visions that often drives some of the best modern HipHop. By attempting to please everyone with punchy syncretized drums and broad melodies, they've created an album that just floats along with little to distinguish it. Meanwhile, The Arsonists undercut their best trait — freestyling 16 bars with bluster and witty energy — with mediocre choruses. The only unique quality about *Date Of Birth* is its inescapably repressed personality. (Moss Reeves)

BUBBA SPARXXX UGLY EP

INTERSCOPE PROMO 12"

Well, Timbaland went down to Georgia, and he was looking for a soul to steal. Instead he found a white guy in overalls named Bubba Sparxxx. Most the Bubba who bellyflopped off his roof into a snarl of barbed wire that that Backyard Wrestling documentary, though. In his video, Sparxxx waddles him in the dirty-dirty mud and calls it "Ugly," uglier than Arn Anderson waddling with Eustace Bitch 'n' Yutbeee doing kilt and body and he puts his hand in the video. Fresh off clowning a Blackalicious beat, Timbaland knif-knats in the tropic country with a hell-zipped buzz and a caboose patch too. And Bubba wails, "You hear that beat datchoo? That's just Timmy talking/Ga ahead three darn beats/Fuck it, break a bottle/Lets be honest/Wone of us would date a nigger." Nope, it's just Bubba and Pezzy Baitz catching lap lascivious in the VIP room at Chevat 3. At the end, Timbaland mixes his bangs barbores, flipping into Mase's "Get Ur Freak On," when she says, "Don't csgay me." Then back to Bubba. (Note: "Wallow" sounds like "Wello") Then back to Mase. Then back to my back I just rapped out trying to beat the Rakim line. "Gance, Cu zipped up his pants."

CANNIBAL OX THE F WORD/LIFE'S ILL/METAL GEAR

DEF JUX CDX15 12"

Well, Cherelle scared us all when she innocently shrugged her pink-sweetened shoulders and sang, "I didn't mean to turn you on." Friends, how many of us have them can fit in it really have them? "You think you can fit in it in that antroax space between love and hate?" asks Vase while plodding through El-P's padding synths. On the remix, RIGGS' guitar broods creepier than creepy guys who always want more than friendship. Our musk-ox MC confesses, "I wore my lust like a cologne, she called it Qdession." Then Vase slaps on the chorus with an aftertaste sting of asphyxiation. At least your girl isn't giving you that "Just A Friend" song and Be Dence. "Life's Ill" is droids and jethaks and features The Juggernauts, whose long awaited album is stacking up more overdue notices than someone who just checked outta here. "Metal Gear" appeared in the column about two years ago and you'll see why I caught an elbow incident from their first colbe with El-P. Awfully nice of the Herbert Lion cathedral organ to enst in the spateness. Vase puts a fork in it. "If you're stantless/Act as if I cam/in de time/Interfection will finish your shewerme." And times keep on slipping, slipping into the meatball, "held in small digits of children inside a world of lost masters".

D-12 PURPLE PILLS

SHADY INTX2000 12"

At least they use a different stat for every course on the otherwise useless radio edit of "This's How." And there's a shofold, from gurgling straws at Big Gulp Bottom to the Quack Break/Pressure bits. (Turned [but not screwed], "Purple Pills" sounds like somebody drooled Nyquil all over the phone (from) while mistakenly dialing The 45 King's "900 Number", instead of the 911 they're really need if ingesting all the Oase vitamins and blow they're bragging about. Somebody's got the runs, another is missing an arm and they all assume that their baby's mother will date each other. Feminism and toolies vary their bounce flows and the sloppy chorus has the Goode MIB bedpines as D-12's pre-passout, chant mumbles into "somebun somethin'". It's a blister pack jam but check your medicine cabinet before doing a folepsant in the nearest cow pasture. Some of the lyrics are as weak as D-12's peep hypebolic rants, but sicker is the fact that we sleep better knowing the dope-ass boxer harmonica solo (and beat) was on an album that debuted at No 1 in Billboard.

EDAN PRIMITIVE PLUS

LEWIS RECORDINGS CDX CDLP

Bosson rapier/producer/leon Edan not only shouts out and samples Bosson's TDS Mob, but he poses with their 1999 "Scratch Reaction" 12" (a Skrotch Pkkr blueprint) in the press photo. After that, he could do an album of Me

Phi Me covers for all I care. On the intro, Edan turns the "Zulu War Chant" rhythm box into the helicopter whining of tube socks full of fuzzy pennies. Then takes a squish through Col Bruce Hoack's Masey patch wailing Umm Quin galoshes. And that's just the intro intro. Edan says, "I love HipHop so much I don't even know what to say with myself." So he bottles himself with the lights off. The Schoelly Q dedication would be comy if he didn't punch the "Magomom" mess out of his drum box while taking a stab at Mankink Cudgelling an oil barrel into the shape of Fresh Gordon. "Rapperfection" is so distorted your speakers (and ears) will grow hair.

In fact, a lot of Edan's beats are on the sweaty headphone litz. "Bored" looks classical piano into uncontrollable fits of, well, whatever fits, because "They haven't found a planet that the author's from." Edan's too weed to be way-back sloppy, naming his name in sequins on the back of Sula's shredded and wax jacket. For who, besides Koolhaed, would decapitate MCs and eat breakfast while listening to Barbra's "Death Mm"? And I'm sure it's an original pressing of the bootleg.

45 KING FEATURING LATI & KID CAPI LATI ROCKS DA BELLS/ PUT THE FUNK OUT

SLAZIN BLANCO 12"

Lati is "off the hook like the 900 Number". Though the title screams B9, "Lati Rocks The Bells" is a new song by the same Lati who once penned the relentless "Brainstorm". While Lati doesn't fog anybody by dropping his double "I" for an "Y", he affects a Beatnuts flow, but doesn't rhyme about ass. Rather, "The fat-ass ass coincides with the drummer." Plus, among him vice tracks don't grow on larches. I'd call it a ponder your winning answer gemshoe trumpet, but I'm also still waiting for Lord Alabaine's verse. Either way, 45 King killed it. As for the B-side, it'll wake you when Kid Capri's verse is over.

MIKE LADD ACTIVATOR COWBOY/ FOX WOODS/WORST ELEMENT OF HIP HOP

CDXNF MUSIC CDX2000000 12"

On "Activator Cowboy", Mike Ladd plays Electric Horseman with a gritty, canting synth line while Daniel Chavis (formerly of Raleigh, North Carolina's The Vindictes) stretches neck for NERD on the falsetto refrain. Rolling through "Fox Woods", Ladd bleeds over two trustpicks and fuses his Claw Five half whin on the run. On "Fox Woods" Ladd plays the odds with "dog snok myths", affix his way through the flicked snok butts, dashed cards and sketched verses outside the Off Road Betting Center. Leaving point shawing to the game theorists, Ladd "fructs" with Dick Vitale antics, talking about "Depends, the beggar's dagger" and how "These days are becoming numbers." With a clipped, "let down the downgrade" order and ethereal swells, "Worst Element Of Hip Hop" is an "instrumental

cut" by DJ Fred One's A Wikk voice cracks, "B-boyin'? They invented that shit at UCLA to get white girls/197 You wasn't even born when that shit started".

URSULA RUCKER SUPA SISTA

STUDIO CITY 12108 CD

Supa Sista is Rucker's first album after half a decade of collaborations with fellow Philly musicians King Britt, Josh Wink and The Roots, as well as European producers A Hero and Jazzoneva. On *The Roots'* last three albums, Rucker read kitchen sink tales that delved into first person accounts of gang rapes, drug dealing and doored inner city lives, illustrating the slippery balance between survival and immortality. But Supa Sista finds her in more solid moral ground, labeling the internet as "The compromised web dream/Soaking/Souling/Our creativity/Our sensitivity" on "Digital" and saying several criticisms at her Black community's treatment of women ("Womanising").

On most of the 12 tracks, the words are resistent, even hanging at times, yet Rucker's voice remains mellifluous, so whispery it could be a fluttering current beating against a window pane, rather than a hanger against your consciousness. Sometimes it's difficult to reconcile the two, especially when Rucker renders lines like "recipients of pale-faced pawing and pafage" ("Brown Boy") with such grace and love that it's obvious she's taking pleasure in rejecting them, even as she uses them to indict her targets. Unlike Sade Wilkins, another "spoken-rap" cop who chose to venture into greater sonic territory on his own debut album, Rucker is content to read and sing her words against a backdrop of tastefully blue soul productions contributed by Rucker's 1993 1/2, 4 Hero, King Britt and Spaceone. Containment's Jonah Sharp, among others, is an early solemn Supa Sista that demands your undivided attention and, eventually, your heart. (Moss Reeves)

SONIC SUM ROCKET/Oscillator

CDXNF MUSIC CDX2000000 12"

I know Sonic Sum's Rod Smith was special when he told me he once had a dream about MC Shy D driving a forklift. "Rocket" is urgent, pacing up the pace and belatedly luggage from Sonic Sum's extraordinary 2000 album *The Sanky Amies*, also released on Osone. Nelly would want its driving pulse by his hip, though he couldn't possibly hear it. Smith is "werridipped in acid", playing an open road test tone on the keyboard as the highway dissolves, colours bleed past and piano wails dart for cover. Og it. It's personal and cryptic, but if he handed it to us it'd be too much to bear. "Oscillators" is even better with its foreboding organ drone, gurgling meanders and "Autopsy bury cadence rising near an utility closet". He also says, "Put a bit drink minimum on one-lock so I'm rocked before I get there." Beer him and pay his tablet. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

AB BAARS TRIO SONGS

GEESTGROEN G093 CD

AB BAARS TRIO + ROSWEILD RUDD FOUR

DATA 012 CD

Reedman Ab Baars pays tribute to Native American culture, drawing material from tribal sources and reworking Charles Ives's "The Indians" and Ray Noble's "Cherokee" for good measure. There's not a hint of banal memory in this highly disciplined music which continually makes unexpected disclosures. As an improviser, Baars respects the character of sounds, a close observer of the texture and shape of individual notes. Sublimating his understanding of 'Indian' ways, he pursues a series of unfamiliar courses, chasing oblique tracks across jazz terrain, accompanied by his precise and vigilant rhythm section, bassist Wilbert De Jode and drummer Mark van Dierhoven. Four presences are captured in 1998, in Amsterdam, when they were joined by guest trombonist Rosweild Rudd, whose playing has obvious affinity with Baars's approach. Granting towards elements that would attract musical resistance, Rosweild's portamento purrs, growls, rages, and snarls. Baars again plays clarinet and tenor. The group's subtle interplay keeps their sinuous voicings largely in check until late in the set, when common ground has been firmly established and Rudd becomes talkative — with and without his instrument.

JAAP BLONK AVERSCHUW

KONTRAANS 047 CD

VOGELKWARTET

COME TO WATCH YOUR VOICE
LONDON LJR032 CD

On Averschuw Holland's leading sound poet entangles his voice within a thicket of electronic equipment. Blonk keeps the directness of his customary vocal acrobatics while creating dense textures and extending his range of utterance. The result is a series of lively, abstract yet effectively structured pieces which, by preserving the dynamics of his unmediated performance, avoid the sense of empty doodling which can sometimes afflict electronic improvisation. Hit-tech verbiage that gives the apparatus something worthwhile to say. Collaborating with Vogelkwartet (vocal, double bass, trombone and bass clarinet doubling soprano sax), an unprocessed Blonk gets to work on texts by Dylan Thomas. The intrinsic musicality of Thomas's vivacity patterned language is most effective when ordered straight. But Blonk's clever, if calculated performance often feels like an embellishment of something that's already sufficiently ornamental.

MR DORGON + LAURA CROMWELL PROVIDENCE

GUTSRAN G093 CD

On the cover Dorgon is painted blue and Laura sports a Cheshire cat grin. The music should

make you smile too; it sounds so artless and free from imitating self-promotion. Dorgon plays saxophone and clarinet, and Cromwell drums. You can tell this is what they really want to be doing, and that's why they sound so fresh and honest. There's no weighty statement, but lots of pleasing details. The percussion is melodic and uncluttered; the mood skulks in low moans and introspective groins, then leaps out killing, or looks into a pattern of inquisitive repetition. A solo track each (Cromwell on organ, Dorgon on a newly eight-string bass) concludes an object lesson in independent thinking and doing.

FLAHERTY/KELLEY/ VOIGT/COOK THE ILYA TREE

BOCHOLDER B04X14 CD

As a lone explorer, Greg Kelley has traced the trumpet to first principles, stripping back the instrument's history to make a music of breath and spirit and metal tubes. For this 1989 session he teamed up with three Massachusetts stalwarts for a free workout with obvious links to contact to a broad jazz past. Drummer Laurence Cook has worked with Bill Dixon and, alongside bassist John Voigt, has supported saxophonists such as James Moody and Sabir Mueen. Here it's Paul Flaherty wailing alto and tenor, his approach indebted to the music's angriest years. Kelley's own recollection seems to encompass Budde Miles as well as Don Cherry, but he's continually edged further out into spaces where old styles/jazz traditions turn alienness into genuine invention.

FRODE GJERSTAD TRIO THE BLESSING LIGHT: FOR JOHN STEVENS

CADENCE JAZZ GRI120 CD

Norwegian headliner Gjerstad remembers drummer Stevens, his long-term associate in the group Detall, who died in 1994. After his trip with William Parker and Hamid Drake, Gjerstad here interacts with fellow Norwegians Pål Nilsen-Love on drums and Øyvind Stensrud on bass. Stevens would have been at home with the delirious paradoxes of their music — at once tight and loose, free and controlled; separate voices wholeheartedly engaged in collective expression. Nilsen-Love captures something of Stevens's characteristic energy and buoyancy at the kit. Stensrud is simultaneously fictional and resilient. Gjerstad solos and swoops restlessly, searching for improvisatory triggers across the full range of his clarinet and alto sax. This three-part tribute does full justice to the drummer's memory and their saying a great deal.

HERBIE HANCOCK FUTURE 2 FUTURE

TRANSPARENCY MUSIC TRANS CD

Arch conceiver Bill Laswell produced Future 2 Future and it bears his aesthetic stamp. Chaka Khan adds a gaily vocal to "The Essence". Guest input from Di Rob Swift and A Guy Called Gentry form suitable feedback loops for the Headhunters legacy. Saxophonist Wayne Shorter, drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Charnett

Moffett also appear; and even a posthumous apt for Tony Williams's drumming. Ever so, the album is understating. Some parts are stagnant; others suggest ways ahead and, hopefully, out. Hancock's desire to find a wide audience has led him into a few blind alleys but he's too true a musician to linger long at a dead end.

THE RAPHE MALIK QUARTET LOOKING EAST: A SUITE IN THREE PARTS

BOCHOLDER B04X14 CD

Malik's name immediately evokes major recordings by pianist Cecil Taylor from the late 1970s, where he contributed quicksilver trumpet. His playing on this concert recording, made in Boston in 1999, bears familiar hallmarks of rapidity and hard brilliance. As a composer he shares Taylor's advanced awareness of how scale can mould listening, and the lengthy suite successfully reconciles improvisatory immediacy with an overarching form. Sabir Mueen, playing various reeds and flute, is a rugged foil. Larry Roland holds steady on bass, while drummer Cody Moffett defines tight and driving contours.

MARSH/ZERANG/ WRIGHT/BERNDT THAT NOTHING IS KNOWN

RECORDED 009 CD

Four seasoned musicians with different backgrounds meet as a quartet for the first time on a 1997 radio session in Chicago. Their improvisations certainly merit wide exposure. Michael Zerang drums. Jack Wright and John Berndt play saxophones. Berndt also deploys homemade instruments, which, with Bob Marsh's electronic shadings and imaginative vocal interjections, cross the session beyond routine free blowing.

WILLIAM PARKER SONG CYCLE

BOCHOLDER B04X14 CD

Recorded with Eliot Chert's voice in March 1993, and Lisa Sokolow's voice with Yoko Fuyama on piano in October 1991, the focus here is on bassist Parker as reflective writer. Doubtless he views composition as part of the same musical continuum as his improvisations with Charles Gayle, Peter Brötzmann, David S Ware and more, but this cycle sets itself apart from those robust outings. Both singers stretch out from the songbook's core, adding risk to Parker's sober and dignified statements.

MARC RIBOT SAINTS

ATLANTIC 7567804912 CD

Ribot's solo guitar album may prove too stark for some, but it distils the essence of his many playing contexts. It's as if he's dropped by to play whatever takes his fancy: it's that informal, in defiance of major label austerities. He subordinates technique to impact and leaves flatter players locked in self-absorption. The opener's tremulous feel recalls Hans Reichel. But as title and material ("Holy, Holy, Holy", "Wildches & Devils") testify, Albert Ayler is Saint's presiding spirit.

MIKE STERN VOICES

ATLANTIC 7567804902 CD

As slick as it gets, despite the presence of saxophonist Michael Brecker and drummer Dennis Chambers, alongside electric guitarist Stern. He must dissolve into the ether as soon as it emerges. He accommodates singers comfortably within a set of entirely exceptional tunes. Largely wordless, his songs are sung in effortless voices in a formulaic guitar-led group concocted in the wake of Pat Metheny.

MALACHI THOMPSON TALKING HORNS

DELMARK D0332 CD

AAJMI trumpeter Thompson thrives alongside Hamet Bluiett's baritone and Oliver Lake's alto, with a rhythm section of pianist Willie Pickett, bassist Harrison Bankhead and drummer Reggie Nicholson. The playing is a pungent antidote to formalism. It's rocky and daring in equal measure, steeped in black American music history yet utterly here and now.

HENRY THREADGILL & MAKE A MOVE EVERYBODY'S MOUTH'S A BOOK

PIPH CD

It starts with the luminous chamber jazz of "Pianists Inside Struggle", with radiant sonorities from Threadgill's flute, Bryan Cartier's vibraphone and the acoustic guitar of Brandon Ross flowing over Storm Talerich's sprightly bass and Darius Pano's meticulous drumming. Elsewhere, when Threadgill doubles alto, Cartier marmos and Ross smoulders on electric, hectic activity supersedes the radiant pastoral mood. Lines intertwine as they coil and undulate, but in Threadgill's arrangements they always remain clearly defined, harmonized yet contrasting colors, brightly illuminated.

FEDERICO UGHI WITH DANIEL CARTER ASTONISHMENT

857 0071 CD

Daniel Ughi, who studied with pianist Paul Blei, is an economical percussionist, skilled in accentuating details and tactfully orchestrating melodic lines, using voice and samples as well as drums. He's the ideal complement to multi-instrumentalist Carter whose tuneful inventiveness on trumpet, clarinet, saxophones and flute reserves welcome exposure here.

DHAVER YOUSSEF ELECTRIC SUFI

PIRA 0412 CD

Rabbi Abou-Khalil proved the viability of the future jazz as an instrument within jazz. Tunisian Youssef settles for a looser fusion of Arab tradition, jazz and more on a beautifully recorded album that reunites his sinuous out and groove voice with the trumpet of Markus Stockhausen and bamboo flute of Deepak Ran, collaborators on Malak (1999). Guitarist Wolfgang Mutschall and percussionist Mero Onelio also appear. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Will Montgomery

RICHARD CHARTIER

SERIES
LINE 001 CD

Sometimes the 'lower case music' mindset threatens to shift into a debilitating introversion or a convoluted diffusion. Pentel's electronic music as Richard Chartier's Series—released last year but just awarded an honorable mention at this year's Prix Ars Electronica in Linz—is a reminder how confident and engaged such music can be. As with some of the work of Bernhard Günter (for whose label tentacle obscuro he has recorded), Chartier's music can be almost aggressively quiet. The sounds have been mastered so low that you have to crank up the volume to discover them. Even then they retain an air of 'quietness.' Such evasive sound events inevitably get tangled up with the surrounding environment. But it's worth stretching the ears in search of Chartier's sequences of inequally sculpted sonic events, as gorgeous detail bodies forth out of the shadows. Superb.

CLIMAX GOLDEN TWINS DREAM CUT SHORT IN THE MYSTERIOUS CLOUDS

MEME 018 CD

A diverse set of short recordings from a mysterious Seattle outfit, Dream..., features splintered punk minutiae, tones and drones. Field recordings, ghastly piano and ancient vinyl. Everything has been worked over and left in a sonic state of repair. The album's dream is hazy and off their hinges and it's got dry rot in the rafters. The dominant strand is an asceticist minimalism made up of rustles, whines and scuffling sounds—a defiantly hybrid, ill-fitting set of compositions. Brevity suits the aesthetic. More than half the tracks here come in under two minutes and there's a meaty absence of desire to extend expiation ad infinitum. Meanwhile, while vinyl fetishists should keep a lookout for the LP version released on Amekus Records.

COELACANTH THE CHRONOGRAPH

PARTITION PI CD

This is the first release from California's Coelacanth, who comprise lower case composer Loren Chase and The Wire's own Jim Hayes (who can often be found hosting this very page). "I just things," says Hayes, of his activities beyond the outer limits. That's an apt enough description of the mouldering, unstable music on *The Chronograph*. The pieces are edited improvisations—treatments of private and public performances built around layered loops. Chase and Hayes create a thick, murky soup, dense with activity. Drones underlie the action, though the duo exhibit a preference for soft, atmospheric interventions coating them. The most atmospheric piece is the alluringly titled "new bodies become a phosphorescence," where tensa pattering sounds and an exhausted whine serve to give feelings of great tension. Thoroughly drenched, the album lives as a fragile consciousness of decay.

WERNER DAFELDECKER & BORIS D HEGENBART

EIS 9
GROR 319 CD

Austrian, top class improvisation built from percussion, guitar, electronics, a sampler and sundry unnamed devices. The seven pieces are oblique soundworks, explorations of textual and instrumental qualities that keep the musicality of most improvisation at a long arm's length. The work is about sounds in isolation, with no pretence at 'dialogue' or tension-release dynamics. It can sound forbidding at first, but eventually Polwechsel's Werner Däfeldecker and Boris Hegenbart pull you deep into their cephalopod soundworld. Däfeldecker's guitar is extremely dry and sepiotically deployed. Yet many of the dominant sounds are percussive, and the duo seem to have an interest in the self-sufficient fragment, reminiscent of the Italian avant garde composer Luigi Nono. Quiet music, undeniably resistant to normal means of gaining purchase but highly rewarding nonetheless.

IAN EPPS AUDIOPHONE

DEAD CEO 101R CD

A Chicagoan multimedia artist, Epps has produced a set of fabric miniatures, consisting of 86 tracks spread over 46 minutes, several just a few seconds long. A good number of the tracks are based on the same source material, a playful glitched piece. This lends a homogeneity and quality to his material, which has a similar listener-friendliness to Oval's. Some of it is spare and simple, but the longer tracks are thickly layered organisations of sound. For the jerky glitch material, Epps manages to sustain a lively, slice-free mood. His habit of breaking the episodes track by track leaves him free to repeat a phrase a few times as a distinct track rather than looping it, and by the time Audiophone has reached track 86, it has pointed the way down numerous witty and provocative pathways without outstaying its welcome.

JOHN HUDAK & JASON LESCALEET

FIGURE 2
INTRINSIC 101R CD

Figure 2 is an untreated document of a performance that brought together hazy-eyed sound artist and poet Hudak and New England based composer Lescaleet. Hudak also uses field recordings (see *The Wire* 209), while Lescaleet works primarily with reel to reel tapes. It's a scatty, bopping, slow moving album, characterised by gentle modulations and subtle shifts. The pair like to explore atmospheres of moodiness and muffled uncertainty. Ahythmic clanks and thuds accompany growling loops: high-pitched whistles rise over subdued, rasping metal sounds. It's a ghostly piece of work but poetry and never more than the sum of its parts. The sounds are strong but the pace and direction of the work's development leave the listener clamouring for a spot of judicious editing.

KOZO INADA

A []
STALPLAAT ST1040 CD

KOZO INADA

D []
STALPLAAT ST1144 CD

These short CDs (13 and 33 minutes respectively) from Staalplaat's 'instinctal series' showcase various excursions in sonic purism. A []'s main track begins with a haunting series of clicks, changing in volume, tonality and stereo placement. The starkness of the realisation sucks the listener into the variations as the track slowly develops and then gives way to silence, followed eventually by a deep, culminating rumble. The next track is life in the islands of a hover. The last piece is the strongest: two minutes of Aube-like treated liquid sounds that build up to an ironic climax. D [] begins with a mobile hissing sound, gradually brought up to painfully distorted static. It's followed by a modulating throbb that slowly draws higher frequency tones and crackles to itself, while the third and fourth play with static in ways that recall Francisco López. But ultimately Inada's sounds don't elicit the rapid involvement that their isolation demands.

BRANDON LABELLE AUTOMATIC RADIO

FRANCES FRONZES CD

On this disc's three performances, LA sound artist Brandon Labelle inadvertently brings into question whether abstracted sonic engagements with 'layer' live up to the promise of significant coherence invested in them. "Speaking in Tongues" plays treated human voices sounds against mooring cattle and a background of crackling. "Mufido-Solitude" is a radio work combining crowd sounds recorded in Vienna and material picked up by contact mic on Labelle's shoes during a walk around the city. For "Pillow Talking," a collaboration with John Chase, he draws on a performance by Louis Hudak mediated by two contact mics—one in the performance space and the other in a metal coupling funnel in Labelle's mouth. Preening messages on the artist's interest in issues concerning the body and public space is about as rewarding as the piece gets. Short of their conceptual framework, the sounds themselves are short on intrinsic interest.

FRANCISCO LÓPEZ & ZBIGNIEW KARWOWSKI

WHINT
ABSOLUTE_A30300 3XCD

This fascinating double set on López's Absolute label was initiated in San Francisco, where he and Karowski (normally based in Japan) generated a core set of sounds from white noise. Then they each worked on these same elements in separate studios to produce independent pieces. Remarkable for the variety of shades it extracts from such a limited palette, Karowski's composition is a piece of cobbing and flowing textures, with sounds pattering from speaker to speaker and directorial nudges until, 18 minutes in its conclusion, it enters an antidote-throbbing state before ending in pulsating static.

Though less expressive and intense, López's companion piece is unsurprisingly similar to Karowski's. Changes of direction are either staggeringly abrupt or extremely slow and incremental. Animated by a solitary low hum, it rides on the underfed, coarsening energy of white noise. Until the last 27 minutes, which are given over to a hiss so faint, you have to crank the volume to hear it. If you can raise yourself

PIMMON ORQUESTA DEL ARRURRUZ

STALPLAAT ST1160 CD

PIMMON ELECTRONIC TAX RETURN

TIGERBATE MEGW010 CD

Pimmon is an Australian electrocast who mangles touches of the embattled lycium of Fennesz with a tougher appetite for crunchy shades of digital noise. *Electronic Tax Return* leads on audibly melodic material. He releases broken tones into a jagged landscape of grit, broken pebbles and looming sonic boundaries. Making brilliant use of such backdrops, he carefully shepherds more defined events in front of them. *Orquesta Del Arrurruz* is also terrific. Though only 30 minutes, it is packed with unrecognisable incident, some mired by classical samples. Although Pimmon stalks the periphery of minimalism, his real allegiance is to clothing textures on a vibrant canvas. On the evidence here, he has a raw ability to compose coherent soundworks from scattered sources.

PURE LOW

STALPLAAT ST1144 CD

Yet more mysteriously packaged minimalism, this time from Austria's Pure. The first two tracks are drones, unsurprisingly, but more happens in the third piece. Working swooping tones in a dense, layered arrangement, Low becomes a wonderful, clanging mass, as sounds pulse and shout across each other. Over ten minutes, it constantly shifts around a basic template, yet somehow achieves mesmerising calm. At moments a whiff of psychotronics recalls a do-fuzzed Masami Akita. The last track is based around a thicker drone, out of which emerge sootily details, such as a taped voice being wrenched over a playback bed. But at 17 minutes, it's Pure smooth.

RICHARD YOUNGS & SAM WICKHAM-SMITH

LAMMERGERIE
VHF 56 CD

Welcome rough edges from two enduring purveyors of hermeticist sonic adventure. Their many textual pieces treat rich sound sources. LAMMERGERIE's wayward sprawl is a long way from the structures of doctrinaire minimalism. Squalling tones are set against off-beat bedroom percussion. The album's occasionally rosy, pastoral glow is erased by the strangest sound on the fifth piece, a creation of almost unrecognisable origins (it rhymes against a silent feature of the duo's early work). The rest is high tech, lo-fi, square peg electronics—unusual, awkward and uncompromising. □

Print Run

New music books and more: reviewed, dissected, dissed



William S. Burroughs with Brian Gysin, whose cut-ups let the noise into the Beat Hotel

THE BEAT HOTEL: GINSBERG, BURROUGHS & CORSO IN PARIS, 1957-1963

BARRY MILES

ATLANTIC BOOKS HSBK £30

BY JULIAN COMLEY

Towards the end of this book, Barry Miles quotes one of William S. Burroughs's famous pronouncements: "My goal in life is total anonymity," he said, taking pleasure in being known as 'El Hombre Invisible'. Yet he moved steadily out of obscurity towards celebrity, not least because writers like Miles have nurtured the craft of Beat biography. The genre has involved a hefty amount of sensationalist gawping, but in the hands of a responsible recorder like Miles, who knew the men in question well and understands the misperceptions of their creativity, an account of Beat lives can cast light on their writing, the stuff we can all get to know.

The actual Beat Hotel was at 9 Rue de la Casse in Paris's 16th Arrondissement, and during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso lived in its shabby rooms and met infested comrades. Meanwhile, their friend Jack Kerouac deepened his patriotism at home. The Beat Hotel was an old-fashioned bohemian enclave. It was also an energy centre and alternative community where these writers developed their art in a climate of perpetual indulgence and experimentation. For the Beats there was no protective wall around literature. Writing was continuous with other forms of experience, as it had been for other Americans, from Henry Miller to Henry Thoreau and beyond. When the Beats wrote, hunger for

drugs and sexual excess flowed into their words along with their passion for arcane knowledge and hermetic wisdom.

Miles established friendships with them later, yet he has the knack of conveying the excitement of that place and that time as though drawing upon firsthand experience. He doesn't elude as narrator of events and sketches of personalities, yet he clearly understands their motivation and their modes of action. Pens at that time offered greater personal freedom than the States. It was bubbling with Existentialism and the Absurd, but for Ginsberg and Corso Europe also meant contact with history. Percy Shelley was the main inspiration for Gregory the Poet, and Miles depicts the prison-hardened, "wine and vomit stained" streetboy craving links to his Romantic neo-Platonist precursor.

Ginsberg pinned Rimbaud's picture to his wall, dreamed of William Blake and paid homage to Cubist poet Guillaume Apollinaire. Hash, heroin and bisexual enquiries are reported in a matter of fact way, but the soundest picture shows Ginsberg in England visiting Stirlings, and noting the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum the "greatest thing in Europe".

In Paris Ginsberg first read the Russian poet Mayakovsky, and he also investigated French Surrealist writing. In person the Americans met heroic figures such as Marcel Duchamp, Dada charlatan Tristan Tzara, controversial novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Henri Michaux, peerless poet of hallucinogenic vision. When Ginsberg met aristocrat poet Edith Sitwell, he invited the 70-year old to submit a naked photograph for an anthology he was preparing

and offered her a joint, which she declined. Any lines that might put them in touch with the spirit of Antonin Artaud were instantly pursued.

Eventually the group got to listen excitedly to Artaud's suppressed radio-philosophic classic "Par En Face Avec Le Jugement De Dieu". Sensative to such paths to the vitalising past, the Beats were also alert to fruitful contacts with current activity and Miles's cast of characters is richly varied. It ranges from Madame Rachas, owner and demure over-seer of their tawdry paradise, to Jacques Stern, wealthy, disabled, erudite junkie. It includes Simon Watson-Taylor, translator of Alfred Jarry's enigmatic work, artist Jean-Jacques Lebel, jazz drummer Kenny Clarke and shrewd pornographer Maurice Girodias, the reluctant publisher of *The Naked Lunch*. There's no shortage of intrinsic interest in such figures and Miles's relaxed style allows them to play their part in the Beat scenario without garish trappings and cheap fills.

The first half of the book belongs primarily to Ginsberg. The second is dominated by Burroughs and his circle, notably Ian Sommerville, Sinclair Boies and Brian Gysin. Gysin, who fictionalised the Beat Hotel in his novel *The Last Museum* continues to grow in stature in histories of Beat life. Miles stresses poet and painter Gysin's significance, both as innovator and as an invaluable prop for Burroughs's creativity. Burroughs is seen consuming large quantities of paregon, talking volubly about junk, drinking endless cups of tea and voraciously reading about obscure classical texts. He also appears surprisingly vulnerable, shedding tears when his tender feelings for Ginsberg meet with friendship

rather than reciprocated love. Such an insight might add another dimension to our understanding of his ferocious satirical fiction. Miles is good at humanising these legendary figures in ways that don't diminish them.

The cut-up technique Gysin discovered sent Burroughs into a fertile frenzy of exploratory writing and assembling. Long sessions were also spent with the flickering Dreamachine, vision-inducing revolving cylinders created by Gysin with Sommerville. That pair staged mixed media performances which led to a fruitful liaison with sound poets Bernard Heidsieck and Henri Chopin. Gysin's "The Permuted Poems" were broadcast on the BBC, which showed early interest in Beat literature. The broadcast brought besotted Australian Beat David Allen to the hotel, in advance of his work with Soft Machine and Gong. Flashbacks and recollections have their place in this busy account, where mood takes precedence over strict chronology. Ginsberg's relationship with his mother is recounted, as is the trauma experienced by Burroughs in the nursery. While the hotel is portrayed as a base for activity rather than a closed domain, broader cultural issues are rarely addressed. Oddly when Miles does speculate on the specific impact of Burroughs's cut-ups, he finds their influence in the green notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, who died in 1937. That glaring error apart, the book is as faithful to detail as it is loyal to the Beat spirit. Corso's view was that "the 'beat generation' nonsense lessens the poetic intent". Miles doesn't play down the sex and drugs, but he does insist that above all the Beats were in love with writing. □

WORKS 1965-2000

DAN GRAHAM

RICHTER-VERLAG HOK \$66

BY ALAN LUCHT

Dan Graham is a New York-based artist and conceptualist whose influence is strongly felt in the work and ideas of his friends Glenn Branca and Sonic Youth—the name will be familiar to anyone who's taken a serious interest in their music. Graham's partiality to "amateur photography" and his idea of art as a hobby rather than a profession would certainly explain the affinity for punk. Although he ran a gallery in 1965 which exhibited works of the nascent minimal scene, he soon concentrated on writing, performance, photography, video and, later, architecture. His best-known tangible works are his groundbreaking "Homes For America" photography series of suburban houses and his various large-scale, two-way mirror constructions. This catalogue to a major retrospective offers an exhaustive, year by year survey of his efforts, with a page devoted to each and every project, but most significantly features a series of interviews with Branca, Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore, Tony

Dunster and others. These shed light on Graham's collaborative role in the late 70s/early 80s New York avant-garde music scene, and reveal him as a kind of older brother in terms of straddling the art and rock worlds.

Gordon originally met Graham in Los Angeles (and also encountered artist Mike Kelley at one of Graham's lectures there, while Kelley was arguing the merits of The Stooges and The New York Dolls with him), and moved into the apartment below Graham's soon after she moved to New York. He asked her to participate in an all-girl group performance he was organising, which would up being part of a festival in Boston curated by then student Christian Markey. Moore soon moved in with Gordon and began hanging out with Graham, who he'd already heard about while working on a short-term project for Vito Aczonio. Both were punk rock obsessives, and Graham had documented a lot of the No Wave scene on tape. Moore was now introducing him to the hardcore punk scene, which Graham documented to some extent on video (including one memorable Mirror Throat show). This informed his classic video *Rock My*

Religion, which equates Shaker circle dancing with the mosh pit and the performances of Patti Smith, Jim Morrison and others. Sonic Youth's song "Shaking Hell" was inspired by the video, and Graham's photos feature in the artwork of their albums *Sister and NYC Ghosts And Flowers*.

Branca talks about Graham's encouragement of his No Wave group Theoretical Girls (co-founder Jeff Lohn introduced him to Graham), and Graham co-produced a single by his subsequent group The Static. Branca also relates how Graham's efforts he and, later, Sonic Youth were able to gig in Europe, and, along with Berlin's Einstürzende Neubauten, find an audience in the art world. Dunster sums it up best: "He was always giving the Fall records and Branca and Sonic Youth. He was relentless in terms of his ability to re-contextualise these things into an overall global structure of the way art and music were being made at the time. He really went outside of that ivory tower conceptual position and that really was very important for me because that's what my generation wanted to do—to go back more into these pop cultural situations."

Beyond these specific connections, we learn that both Graham and Bruce Nauman's use of time delay in their late 60s/early 70s video works was partially inspired by his presence in Terry Riley and Steve Reich's music (both Graham and Nauman participated in performances of Reich's *Pandulum Music* at the time, and Graham got contributions from both Reich and Philip Glass for an issue of the art magazine *Aspen* he guest edited). While the book has the requisite critical assessments of Graham's art, there's also an essay by John Miller called "Now Even The Pigs Are Grooving", which examines rock's importance to Graham in depth and describes one Doors concert in Detroit, in which Morrison mercilessly taunts the crowd (which must have left a serious impression on Iggy Pop).

Unfortunately none of Graham's insightful articles on popular culture are reprinted here, (for these, seek out the 1993 collection *Rock My Religion*). Even so, this does represent the most extensive history of Graham's work so far. A must for anyone basing the art/punk crossover of the last two decades. □

LIKE YOUNG: JAZZ AND POP, YOUTH AND MIDDLE AGE

FRANCIS DAVIS

DA CAPO HOK \$26

BY BEN WATSON

Francis Davis is a leading American jazz critic, and from the opening sentence of this collection—"Miles Davis departed liner notes, regarding them almost as a form of insult"—you sense the special combination of shrewd values, unadorned learning and nuanced opinion which characterises a genuine culture. American critics allow themselves plusher sentences than their nervous European counterparts, and Davis pades in data, adjectives and encapsulated opinions with enviable skill. If his prose resembles a luxury car, it's because his readers don't just wish to get from A to B; they have the wealth and leisure to expect an enjoyable ride as well. Many of these pieces were published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, where Davis is a contributing editor, but there are also pieces from *The New York Times* and *Village Voice*, mainly from the last five years.

The concept of this collection is that it's about age and social identity: so Davis looks at pop music too. A section on voices includes Hoagy Carmichael and Frank Sinatra, and the last chapter deals with Bill Brannigan, Brian Wilson, The Velvet Underground and Don DiMucci. The Don section is terrific, and is wisely placed last. In 1959, DiMucci had the famous hit "Teenager In Love" with his group The Belmints, and has

since been through boom again Christianity and the enigmatic music scene. In 1989, he was looking for another hit, so DiMucci, his manager Zach Glickman and Davis met up in his original Bronx neighbourhood for a walk about, during which they discussed poverty, gangs and drugs. Then there's a visit to Davis's residence in swanky Boca Raton, Florida. Davis can drop references to Walter Benjamin's *The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction*, but remains streetwise. His account of who's who on Belmont Avenue and 187th Street—the boutiques, churches and hustlers—is a gem, a miniature guide to the street geographies of working class New York. It's this awareness of social fact which makes his writings on jazz glow.

Nevertheless, jazz is Davis's forte, so the section that deals with Bud Powell and Dave Douglas, Kind Of Blue and Wildflowers, Rahsaan and Dnette, Wynton Marsalis and Ken Burns, and other contemporary problems in jazz is the meat of the book. (And if your definition of musical torture is "Rahsaan Gets Follin' On My Head", you'll find the chapter on Bacharach heavy going.) There is a fantastic interview with Sun Ra: as with interviews with William S. Burroughs at his most psychotic, you decide the man is clinically insane, only to marvel at the poetry and politics his barman cracks open. Some of Ra's rattle wordplay — he reveals shit in every crackle and Gorbachev as the third store from the sun — is perfect.

Although Davis's function is to provide consumer guidance (in an account of a holiday in Santa Cruz, he is practically writing restaurant reviews), that he can write so intelligently and politically testifies that jazz is the music of a vast, century long struggle for civil rights. In England, prose this extended and sophisticated would never be allowed near anything which questioned the nation's pinched, middleclass concept of culture. (London Review Of Books is currently involved in a heated debate about music, all centred on Edward Said's urgent re-interpretation of Brahms). The high status of jazz in the States bestows another benefit: Davis can go from technical issues of chord choice to national foreign policy in an unstrained way, something that would sound pretentious and bogus for anyone writing about Oasis or Radiohead. He quotes Wynton Marsalis saying that jazz "gives us a glimpse into what America is going to be like when it becomes real", and complains that he is "talking in the way presidential candidates are prone to". Although, unlike the Seattle protestors, Davis seems to believe that today's American "democracy" somehow delivers, he hits the nail on the head here: the problem with Marsalis's bullsh*t is not musical, but political.

Davis's judgments are not always sound. He is simply wrong when he says Cassandra Wilson's talents are dramatic rather than musical, implying he has never seen her direct

her musicians in person, a stunning example of leishenph. His disapproval of saxophonist James Carter's honking "excesses" shows little affinity for R&B, as does his po-faced condemnation of gangsta rap as immoral (how can someone who writes so persuasively about Elvis Presley's musical abilities — and had me rushing to play my copy of The Million Dollar Quartet album — fail to catch the lunkhead genius of Ernest?). His enthusiasm for Dave Douglas comes across as a response to calculated competence rather than real artistic stature. When he thanks Lou Reed for reminding us, in *Songs For Drella*, that "nobody lives forever", Davis pokes seriousentiousness about mortality with all the punch of a vicar at the graveside. He repeats Gunther Schuller's idea that Lester Young was the most innovative thing in jazz between Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, when anyone who listens to jazz from the bottom up knows it had to be Coleman Hawkins.

Yet, despite these lapses, Davis has got the edge, independence and courage to see through current trends and hype to identify Mulholland Richard Abrams as the supreme composer in jazz today, and to distinguish Bill Frisell's measured Americana from the haphazard postmodernism of his downtown colleagues. These kind of judgments make Francis Davis's essays a gift from America you don't want to snuck in the morning. □

THE GRAFFITI SUBCULTURE: YOUTH, MASCUINITY AND IDENTITY IN LONDON AND NEW YORK

NANCY MACDONALD
PALGRAVE HSK \$45

BY NEM ARBAS

Despite its preoccupation with language, graffiti culture has long been Hip-hop's mute element. Never managing to capture the miradise held by rap music or breakdancing, and occupying a satellite space, part removed yet intensely entwined in Hip-hop, to most people graffiti culture is, as Nancy Macdonald puts it, "background scenery, an urban white noise". Without a coherent voice, its place within Hip-hop's pantheon has been contested. A while back graffiti legend Futura 2000 said that graffiti has no true connection with Hip-hop culture. Through his eyes graffiti was part of a street

culture thumwink tied together by marketers to produce a convenient sales package for non-initiates to consume. However, for many Hip-hop readers, graffiti is an integral element, so integral that subscribing to it assures authenticity as graffiti is the silent bearer of Hip-hop's weltanschauung, subscribing to its ideals guarantees instant integrity.

Viewing graffiti as standard bearer is an interesting way to approach The Graffiti Subculture. As an examination of graffiti's internal workings, Macdonald's ethnographic standpoint proves an illuminating one. She gets dirty, you can smell the pungent aroma of spray cans as she jetisons academic frostiness in fewer of mimesis. She talks to old and new writers, stars and unknowns. Showdown writers as they create, she unveils the movies existing in graffiti culture.

The trouble is, before you get here you have to

leaf through Macdonald's intellectual agenda. This text is densely academic, as she spends the first few chapters charting her epistemological perspective. This she does by chopping the theories of a host of sociological elites. Choosing the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies as her main focus, she paints their main findings as an inability to define culture in non-political terms. Tied to Marxist theory, the CCCS idea of sub-cultural agency sinks under the weight of political dogmas, particularly when witnessed from the vantage point of hindsight. For two comes in the guise of Postmodernists who, in her mind, falsely dictate a position of egalitarian relativism while holding onto the voice privileges afforded by their academic leanings. The defensive context she provides is as much a claxon bawl at the elitist academy as it is a marker to us that she is aware of her outsider status. Which is to say you

have quite some work to do before you get to the book's premise.

When you get there, Graffiti Subculture provides some illuminating insights from Futura 2000, graffiti documenter Henry Chalfont and One, which elucidate the kinetics of graffiti culture. What unfolds is an exploration of masculinity in the world of graffiti. Also covertly housed in the book's ellipse is Hip-hop's ideology. And with Hip-hop's fundamentalism wing currently growing, an examination of the graffiti mind provides a pin-hole glimpse into Hip-hop's raison d'être. Reading graffiti via sociology, Macdonald avoids a purely historical reading, choosing instead to give a more penetrative vision of the contemporary male tagger. Her particular reading of graffiti may not appeal to those seeking a linear history, but it does provide a multitude of new perspectives, illuminating the motives behind the culture. □

BANANAFISH #15

TEDEUMHOUSE \$11

BY BEN WOODSON

BananaFish, a magazine plus compilation CD published in San Francisco, has finally located posse stylists adequate to the global adorable-sil of self-released noise, musical subculture, small label rap and off cut-out: cultural products whose sheer quantity and barbed intelligence are custom built to wreck the antennae of conventional criticism. The writers — John Cieslik, Steve Jasin Zappa, Alessandro Mendini III — spent these unlikely names which often signify a spasm of cultural wit. The writing is analytic, fast and allusive, untrammelled by any anxiety that readers won't be hip enough to decode multi-jan references to TV trash, foreign words, arcane compounds, shovels, rockers or Outfit: official and unofficial (and downright on) cultures are merged and subverted in a slurry of bad manners, insult and obscenity.

Ludicrous, surrealism, frog hop clauses jump into Joycean wordplay, suggesting that techniques previously restricted to Language Poetry could move on down to infiltrate the great unwashed-journalism that's swapped rock gods and drug gods for Free Impressionism and DIY cassioles. Amidst the verbal stage swam six labels whispering some of the brightest underground insights since Stefan Jaworski's mail-order Scum List became available exclusively to the politically incorrect.

BananaFish writers are awarded page rights to pull their will to wall rants and low letters to the neonomic agonies of contemporary music: Maximum Rock 'N' Roll for readers who're new experienced Valise and Pete Myers, Omlette and Tammy Wyette (maybe wage labour and clonk-bomb too). Early issues of the magazine was so choked with chat offense it seemed like just another dose of bad taste pastiche Americana, whirled by a refusal to distinguish between self-publicising bad boy avant gardens and the

reliant revelation of authentic restructurists. The fact that BananaFish is now accessible to those unimpressed by Frisco out styleform probably means it's sold out. Our gain.

The accompanying CD mines correspondences between rap and spartan cultural zones. Segueing the demerited voices of Anti-Honey and the blurring, close-miked bowed bass of Rag Egg into Etude (If) For Computer-Assisted Sounds by Romanini's Ana-Maria Avram is inspired. Cover artist Christine Shields suggests surrealist rumour, while Alex Cruise shows half-he to the latest developments in the short American prose poem, while Kalia Marches. Soylent Green is an aphasic drive. There's sound collage of seagulls and syllabs by Leicester's Volcano The Bear (a Radioscape Sparrow who stole Johnny Bannette's sockability for Robert Wyatt's ambrosia). In their interview, VTB members dink 'make-it' rock groups. It-equipped troops, the unforbearability of joy in music and 70s kids' TV in live, Avram is caustic about the classical world and its terror of sonic

actually and imprisonment. We're also granted glimpses of her bawling scenes, a gut-string interview about slaughterhouse hygiene and the economics of Mac Goo disease, an interview with out candel candles due to Coyle & Sharpe, plus a column where Stanley Jasin Zappa dies Society Of The Spectacle, closes 'cosmic' epigram, and rightly hails Franz Huttering's Gombert as the beginning of the next chapter of post-Culture musical evolution (though as a satoshiaphant himself, Zappa modestly feels he can only extol other players if he can outdo 'em, a recipe for weak critique of current pop (see music). Between 1927 and 1938, the American journalist Eugene Jolas issued a Parnassus journal named 'translation': its collective 'revolution of the word' was stomped into oblivion by a world war, and remained invisible to a clearly identified postwar cultural culture. As magicalist and materialist as Flannery O'Connor, BananaFish pushes past the individualistic legacy of Frisco's Beats to reignite translation's funky spirit. □

SELECTED WORKS: 1980-2000

ACHIM WOLLSCHIED

SELECTION PRK \$25

BY MATT PITCHER

German sound and installation artist Achim Wollschied prefaces this slim photo-based volume — with brief theory-driven preface texts, in his native language and English, by himself, Brandon LaBelle and others — with the disclaimer: his work is not the kind that seeks to dominate its own presentation. His sonic and visual installations, such as the 1000 sound-transducers emitting continuous sinewaves at 1500 Hz attached to a wall in the Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, are 'unfeasible' without a practical connection to a previously existing context. Equally, the works' formal qualities are meant to be developed through, and are often triggered by, movement and feedback from people passing by. So theoretically, and practically, the book should have nothing to offer. Nevertheless, it's a testimony of sorts to an intriguing series of acts

specific conceptual works involving sound, light and human movement, which Wollschied has been pursuing in the last few years in pedestrian spaces or institutional venues, mainly in Frankfurt and Tokyo, as a counterpart to his recorded work for labels like Staalplast and Mills Plateau.

Since the mid-80s, Wollschied has been a member of the art group Selektion which, originally indebted to Situationism and park, has been increasingly involved with performance investigating theories of communication and technical systems — more Melchior Ochupik. It's a complex alliance born of the desire for an art that foregrounds contingent elements of experience while aiming to subvert the technological terms that 'control' meaning. These desires find expression in a stylish minimalism combined with an obsession with function and interactivity — an art strongly poised between Bauhaus and the postcards. Photographs of crowded streets met with concrete planes, neon strips and lighting grids.

Many of the works involve 'tracking' and converting phenomena through different setting and projecting devices, so that people find an everyday space colonised by a rogue system of intelligibility: as with the bridge spanning the entrance to the Krupp steel plant in Bochum, on which 126 panes of glass were able to light up independently to reflect the movement of passing pedestrians. Wollschied is captivated by such abstract redefinitions and inversions of the real, and this is evident in the sonic work as well, for instance installations which reproduce exterior sounds in interior spaces. He has a long-standing fantasy of producing 'an invisible sculpture whose shape was only defined by its being void of sound': a cube of negative ambience stalked out in a pedestrian zone. A by-product of this idea was a project that recorded traffic sounds on a street in Aomori, Tokyo. These were then amplified and converted into sonic signals, which were projected on the other side of the street. Another prototype in

development is a sonic 'companion', a portable cylinder box sized up which 'transforms environmental sounds into parallel sonic structures'.

Despite Selektion's rejection of notions of an autonomous artist, it is still something problematic about their approach: it involves the desire to exert some kind of transformation on real spaces by a procedure carried out by technical means at an iconic level. In the process it reconnects people with their environment in a counter-intuitive fashion. However, the alliance between art, transformation and technology is an unstable one. Wollschied's work is as much following in the wake of the increasing extension of technology into lived spaces as realising this process. It's as likely to become implicated in the development of designer ambiances as subvert them. As with Warhol, the originality comes from the subversion of art and soundwork by technology, rather than the other way round. □



It doesn't seem right to be coloured so white: spectral minstrel Emmett Miller

WHERE DEAD VOICES GATHER NICK TOSCHES

LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY HQR \$24.95

BY ALAN CUMMINGS

Along with Richard Meltzer and Lester Bangs, Nick Tosches was one of the thummers of US rock writers who really defined the form in the late 60s and early 70s. Of the three, Tosches was always the hardest to pin down, for the music never appeared to be as central to him as to Bangs or Meltzer. With the benefit of hindsight, it now seems like the music, along with the booze, broads and dope, was just more combustible material to feed Tosches's personal bonfire in which he fogged his inimitable 'tough guy with classical leanings' writing style. And indeed, while his first books dug deep into the neglected musical trash heaps of honky tonk, proto rock 'n' roll and whitetrash demi-god Jerry Lee Lewis, Tosches hasn't written a book solely about music since the mid-80s. More serious and, more importantly, lucrative pursuits beckoned, and he is recently best known for his *Worship* Far writing, and his impressions, even stunning books on Dean Martin and Sonny Liston. The dark currents that drove these men, and the tendrils that bound American popular entertainment to organised crime have provided Tosches with his most fruitful material. For *Where Dead Voices Gather*, however, Tosches has returned to an obsession that has gnawed at him for nearly 30 years — an obscure yodelling blackface singer and comedian named Emmett Miller who recorded a couple of dozen sides in the late 1920s. Among them, his version of "Lovesick Blues" inspired a generation of early

country singers. The eerie and bizarre contours of Miller's "back voice" limn a special space in American history, between Broadway and the Deep South, urban and rural, sucking in the dying breaths of minstrelsy and vaudeville just before their eclipse by recordings, radio and cinema. As Tosches writes it, Miller ties together the "mixed and mongrel bloodlines of country and blues, of jazz and pop, of all that we know as American music." With the recent revival of interest in the period before radio and the growing recorded music industry started eroding regional differences, particularly through the resuscitated label, *Where Dead Voices Gather* is timely indeed. Even more so in that minstrelsy is a genre that usually gets written out of musical history. It is viewed as a lachrymose and embarrassing relic of modern PC attitudes would look away, preferring to forget that for 80 years the minstrel show was the most important form of popular entertainment in America (and one that regularly drew TV audiences of 16 million here in the UK, until the BBC axed *The Black And White Minstrel Show* in 1978), and one that provided employment for black entertainers as well as white.

Tosches first wrote about Miller in his 1977 book, *Country*, and has returned to the theme at regular intervals, as and when his poring over archival and library research turned up more information about the minstrel. But for all the work closely expended, the pickings have been slim. The death of those who knew Miller and his essentially superior quality (again and again we come across interviewees who can remember only the sketchiest details and numbers) are as

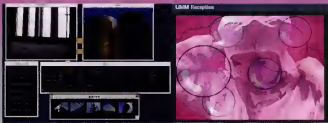
much to blame as the ephemeral nature of popular entertainment. Fortunately, Tosches is too wise a writer to try to hang a biography on scant branches, or to make his own often fruitless quest the central thread of the book. Instead, with Miller as a focal point, he has chosen to weave a dense web of meditations on the nature of American popular culture itself. Like Barthes's notion of Tokyo centering around the blank and unknowable void of the Imperial Palace, Miller's absence for much of the book is quite as significant as his presence. Recurring throughout the book, comets dragged into orbit around Miller's dark star, are crucial figures such as *The Singing Brakeman* Jennie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Bob Dylan and William Faulkner. Twinkling beyond these familiar names are a whole firmament of others: Samuel Beckett, Irving Berlin, Morton Feldman, Al Jolson, Herodotus, Bessie Smith, Bob Wills, the Dorsey Brothers, Homer Robert Johnson, Lee Winna and Her Savage Dancers... Digression heaped upon digression, and from the sublime to the ridiculous, the sheer volume of names, songs and places referenced can get overwhelming. At times it feels like the entire contents of 30 years' worth of cross-referenced file cards has been pulled out and dumped in your lap. More befuddling is Tosches's accomplishment, for all the byways loquaciously and eruditely trodden, in coming up with a clutch of coherent ideas.

Among these is the truth that in popular music, as in everything else, there's nothing new under the sun — or as the Homeric translator Robert Fitzgerald put it, "our poet came late and had supremely gifted predecessors." Tosches's interest is primarily in the eternal wrestle to be

found in words, and he delights in following the course of particular phrases or song situations through multiple versions, forward in time or back to ancient history. Through this methodology, he takes Smith's notion of the miscegenation of black and white (and many others) musics one step further, and deftly demonstrates that any separation between "primitive" and commercial (or in today's terms the "real" and the "fake") is equally fallacious. Showtimes seep into the blues and hillbilly repertoire, mutating and inspiring new urban variants. The lure of money is the principle determinant for musicians, and if the pose of "primitive" or "rural" is a selling point, well, it's just as easily imitated as that of the smooth urban sophisticate. Thus, the nature of authenticity and America's need for fantasy in its showbusiness is another important theme, and one which satirically sunder-punches PC tendencies. The folk boom and attendant blues revival is lambasted as the "demeaning con show of the celebration of the primitive... the grossest and most degrading of all minstrelsy". For Tosches, the exaggerated violence and put-on dangerousness of gangsta rap are no less stereotypes than the happy, smiling "boss" of the turn of the century: stereotypes of the (white-owned) entertainment industry is happy to peddle in the name of commodified individuality and vast profit.

Criticism? An occasional over-reliance on synchronicity. The odd facetious phrasing in Tosches's otherwise supremely elegant prose. But not much else. It's a forthright and thoughtful look into a world that few of us would dream of having any contemporary relevance. □

Ether Talk



Out on a LIMM: screenshots from the McCoy's public-access Live Internet Multi-user Mixer

As far back as 1970, the art historian Jack Burnham organized the exhibition *Software, Information Technology, Its New Meaning For Art* at New York's Jewish Museum, introducing computer algorithms into an art museum context. Much of the performance art, interactive art, and conceptual art emerging at the time strove to reveal the internal logic of art, a process which Burnham likened to 'software', that set of rules that execute the principles behind functioning systems. The logics of these artistic pursuits continue in contemporary art today, especially since so many artists and musicians work explicitly with manipulative software.

As visual artists, New Yorkers Jennifer and Kevin McCoy appreciate the computer's ability to visualize sound and manipulate music and images. In contrast to many programs used by computer musicians and live video performers, they have placed their software on the Internet, to a space where observer and the observed are often confused and coexistent. Engaging with the multi-user characteristics of online culture, their software premises what few others do: a social life. Their Live Internet Multiuser Mixer (LIMM), an experiment in the real-time generation of aesthetic moments, is a conceptual gesture: a collaborative music and image-making space that can be inhabited by any user who comes to log on. With a system in which multiple participants simultaneously add, manipulate and remove sound and image files, software becomes much more

than a tool or an instrument: it takes on properties of a living organism. Governed neither by a single authoritative performer nor by a generative algorithm, the look and sound of the interface resembles a Cagan 'salsica': an empty context within which an infinite amount of agents can deposit their trace; a digital version of what Joseph Blythe would have called a social sculpture.

The McCoy's have been working with digital sound and image for nearly ten years, having trained at Renaissance's Integrated Electronic Arts Program (IEAR Studios). Among other multimedia installations and New Media art projects, they have authored several progressively more intricate systems for performing sound and video remixes, including *Cutcurve*, *Whirligig*, and now *LIMM*. *Cutcurve* layers recorded and live audio samples and generates random loops that the user can then activate and dynamically manipulate in real time. The used bits are sequenced, drawn out, split or otherwise mixed, and are played as accompaniments to video or used as a live remixing tool during performances. In 1999, Kevin McCoy performed with *Cutcurve* with Pauline Oliveros at *The Thing* in New York. In addition to Oliveros's music, sound was gathered from a real time connection with a group of performers in Buenos Aires, both supplying McCoy with rich data sources for his distorted loops. As a follow-up to *Cutcurve*, *Whirligig* was a program designed to translate the language of

the earlier software into video. Video feeds provide the raw material: they can select a sequence of stills and make it loop, flicker or play in random order. Layering and compositing allow for further possible imagery. A 'sliding' tool enables them to 'scrub' the video sequence and mirror movements and gestures made by a musician during a live performance.

LIMM is a hybrid software package combining audio and video, currently in development and designated for a winter release. In sharp contrast to the two previous projects, this new program will function only online. From a homepage, a visitor can choose to view the 'receiver' interface or the 'mixer' interface. The first is a plain browser window that acts as the display screen for the audio-video remixed performed on the 'mixer' interface. Opening this second window lets the user enter the URL of their choice. This interface provides a framework for automatically turning a Web page into a list of its constituent source media files that can then be remixed and collaged, so it can be an alternative way of viewing the Internet itself. Each of the various sound and image files that exist on the chosen Website are isolated and listed on a cue sheet. The user can then select a sequence of files, manipulate or overlay them in ways similar to *Cutcurve* and *Whirligig*, and then broadcast them to the user's 'viewer' window. The system supports most Web-based files (jpeg, gif or bmp image files; Flash, mp3, and QuickTime movie files;

The interactive software of Jennifer and Kevin McCoy shows how it's possible to have an artistic social life online.
By Anthony Huberman

MP3 and wav sound files) and therefore turns the Internet (effectively, an infinite database) into an immense file source. Unlike Web radio or Web TV broadcasts, *LIMM* allows multiple users to work within the 'mixer' space simultaneously and can therefore host dynamic collaborations across the Internet with various performers altering the cue list with their selected files. The window also includes a 'chat' area where users can exchange suggestions and tips for further Websites and image and sound files to add to the mix. Work is underway to support recording and replaying the system, and even using one mixer's output as a new source input for another mixer.

A visit to *LIMM* might reveal an ongoing composition in progress or a blank screen: the fluctuating realities of networked projects reflect the social life of online activity. The application is only activated once anyone assumes authorship and initiates a performance. Special guest performers could be scheduled and publicized, or friends could arrange a time to log on. The element of chance, however, is omnipresent, as the platform remains stubbornly public and anonymous users could join a composition midway through. Placing these ideas into the public context of the Internet, the artists can emphasize the relevance of a socially constructed system of networks and can introduce software to the realities of social life. ☐ Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's work can be found at: www.kcmccoy.com

Go To:



It's been a busy few months over at online label **FAIRT** (www.fairt.com). October is the last chance to sponon the whole of their whopping, limited edition 24X3" CD series *voidObject* (reviewed in *The Wire* 215) from the ether, for free: with contributions from artists such as Ektedeh Ehlers, Pina, Alex Rabalais, Steve Roden, Scanner and others, it's well worth the download time. While the files are settling onto your hard disk, take time to look at *36* (www.fairt.com/36mm), a touring exhibition of graphic art that is currently making its way around the world. Picked into a rtfy box containing slides and projects, the chances are that images by graphic artists such as Meg's Tina Frank, 12K's Taylor Douppe and Fehler from FAIRT (who also curated it) will soon be on display at a venue near you. No MP3s at the long-awaited *Posteverything*

(www.posteverything.com), but there's a great deal of free audio to suit your streaming needs. A 'community project' instigated by the folks behind UK labels Left and Swm, the site offers information on artists such as Susumu Yokota, Maki Sugi, PJ Harvey, collaborator Rob Ellis, vintage post-punkers like etc. As well as offering retail therapy, *Posteverything* is a space to meet like-minded listeners on the message board, while a 'random play' button ensures a mystery selection of music while you're at it.

On the other side of the Atlantic, journalists are setting up their own private music writing havens. *The Dunes* (www.dunes.com) is a PhD student and music critic Oliver S Wang's collection of musings. Among the myriad of reviews written for various publications, you can check out Wang's own record collection and browse his O-

Dub mixtape selection, all while listening to his audio broadcast *Aerial Bombings*. The late Portuguese poet, loner and futurist Fernando Pessoa inspired music mogul Marc Wiedenbaum to set up *Disquiet* (www.disquiet.com), another one-man zone offering plenty of writing. Here are interviews with the likes of Bogdan Radzyski, Autch's Sean Bosn, Phloex and Hovav: (accompanied by credited transcripts), as well as label profiles, threepieces and a mailing list to keep you updated on the site's developments. The *Pugster* author is an ongoing list of extrajug music books and to get some hands-on experience, the Audio Games section helpfully reviews sites by musicians and programmers who blur the line between musical composition and playful recreation".

ANNE HILDE NEST

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On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh



BJÖRK LONDON ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

BY LOUISE GRAY

It's often been said that the size of a concert hall matches that of a musician's ambition, but somehow, and deliciously so, Björk has both the position and confidence to subvert almost everyone's expectations. A few days after opening her Vespertine album tour with four dates in Paris, Björk is in the Westminster church of St John's, a 300-seat venue more usually associated with discreet chamber concerts and restrained sentiments. All the more reason why the seclusion of St John's provided the perfect setting for a set comprised mostly of Vespertine and its outtakes. The new material's strength lies not only in an increasingly subtle orchestration — here Björk is joined by harpist Zeena Parkins, San Francisco's Matmos and, from Greenland, a 14 member female choir — but an emotional intimacy that earlier albums only hinted at. Maybe one reason "Big Time

Sensuality" doesn't feature on tonight's setlist is simply because it's been superseded.

The thrill of tonight's act, of course, experiencing, in close-up, both the fantasy and reality of Björk. A small stage — Parkins, Matmos's Drew Daniel and Martin Schmidt, with laptops and little else, don't take up much room and the lights are tucked away neatly at the back in two swaying, bowing rows — is dominated by a musical box. Björk herself enters through the audience; the swan dress has been photographed often enough, but nothing prepares you for the emphatic nature of her movement.

Walking as if en pointe, Björk sings "Unravel" without a microphone as she roams around the rows of seats. There's an oceanic air of motion apparent here and on the acoustic air of "Hugin Poetry" and the modal purity of an extraordinary (and as yet unrecorded) "Gentle Palms" that the distance of larger venues would only make greater. To see Björk hesitate before climbing those scales of "Aurora" or to pace about on "Gotham Lullaby" (another of Vespertine's original 28 songs which was

discarded in the last mixes and here sung partially in Icelandic) is to be admitted to an expanded, somatic meaning of the songs themselves.

The elision of physical presence and music is accentuated in the odd gongs on in Matmos's corner, where the boys are up to far more than triggering samples and strobing strings with violin bows. As Björk winds up her music box to begin the jagged melody of "Frost", an enchanting smile is Schmidt's cue to take up his position in a litter tray full of miked-up rock salt. Hard as it looks, his long figure sticks to boards. There's something unadorned about his actions and, as Daniel mimes the backing tracks and his partner's march into a separate live event, there's a dead of frost, a hallucination, of a loss of time. Later, for "Cocoon", a static cascade of a rhythm track will be generated by Schmidt — his hands covered with contact mats — carrying Daniel's head and torso. Small time sensuality, perhaps, but no less affecting for it.

If such delicate music making demands a lot, it arrives immediately in the harder, more solid

guise of "Venus As A Boy". Switching to an accordion, Parkins proves her versatility, opening the sound up with a bellow stretching sich "It's In Our Hands", the last Vespertine outtake, explodes midway with Björk, Parkins, choir and Matmos leaping up and down in an ebullient series of rhythmic claps. It's also the introduction for the louder sounds that come with a song more enigmatic than, following "The Anchor Song", Björk and Matmos unleash the big guns for "Hidden Place" and, finally "Human Behaviour". Replicated with full studio precision, if the crisp definition of the beats sound momentarily away, it's only because of what's gone before. Björk swings her arms, marching style, for her naked ape king, shaking a forearm to propel her to the next level. And that was it. "London, don't be sentimental," she says, before "topping away down the side of the church. Three weeks later, Björk and parkins — this time, augmented by a full orchestra — travel across town to deliver a longer show at the Coliseum, home to the English National Opera. And you know it won't be the same. □

BEYOND THE PALE FESTIVAL SAN FRANCISCO GREAT AMERICAN MUSIC HALL

BY JIM HAYNES & PHILIP SHEPHERD

An endemic attitude of despair permeated the San Francisco music community after the closing of the Downtown rehearsal studios, which had once housed hundreds of groups and musicians. The new owners of the huge building had intended on cashing in on the dot-com mania and craved all of the musicians to begin renovating the space. While all of the evicted can now snugly dwell in their former landlord, who hasn't come close to renting out that space, many of those groups have dissolved or departed the Bay Area.

In spite of his eviction, Neurosis's Steve Von Till, with his unbreakable will, generous hospitality and Viking good looks, wasn't going to let that happen to his avant Metal project, nor would he let San Francisco suffer from the general apathy that has been compounded by the visibly shrinking number of venues for interesting live music. He and his wife Kristin, who together on Neuro Recorders, organised the first of hopefully many Beyond The Pale music festivals in San Francisco. For this four day event held at the Great American Music Hall — a modestly sized but beautifully restored 1907 theatre, built out of the rubble of the city's 1906 earthquake, offering a tempting metaphor for the recent dot-com boom and bust devastation — the musical programme reflected Von Till's and Neurosis's diverse influences, from the folkloric twang of alt-country through the unashamed masculinity of grindcore and death rock to the engulfing drone.

The first night of the festival began on shaky ground with Von Till and fellow Neurosis acolyte Scott Kelly each offering visually identical sets of songs as warmed, acoustic guitar slinging solos who had emerged from the West Coast grindcore scene to tell tales of misery and transcendence. Both attempted to forge a lineage between the tales of hard masculinity of Johnny Cash and

Merle Haggard and the post-adolescent angst of hardcore and Metal, yet found success much more difficult to achieve. Their forced chords and cigarette damaged voices shot for a desperado theatricality, but landed a little flat.

San Francisco Goth madrigal ensemble Amber Aylwin then took the stage and shouldn't have. By the time Michael Gira, backed by a stripped down version of his Angels Of Light, came on, the audience had become tense. Unexpectedly dignified in his shape linen suit, Gira looked like a guest version of actor Russell Crowe. Fleeted out by multi-instrumentalist Dave Schecter and Larry Mullins, Gira's belting and sometimes gutting baritone voice worked like a disturbance beneath calm drummed monochords, pulling at the notes like a magnet. A set of mostly recent material scored with a grandiosity that belied its earthly content of love and bitterness. There was a hint of humour, though: as the audience howled for the 1991 Swans song "Tallure", Gira shot back, "You clap for a song about my father dying? You fucking motherfuckers!" But he threw the crowd off his feet for a second time as he smiled and introduced the statement.

Osbore opened the second night with an unabashed explosion of the id, with a studied heroin rock homage to Rowland S Howard from guitarist Nico Wenner, while Gabe Robinson shed his businessman's attire, barking non-verbal utterances and whipping out his cock. Yet the biggest surprise of the festival was the following performance from Zent Gero, whose appearance had been called in the question by the deportation of guitarist KK Null, the latest in a disturbing trend of immigration officials refusing entry to international artists. Nevertheless, Zent Gero continued as a duo of multi-talented guitar virtuoso and drummer Fujikake, offering oddball groovy 60s psychedelic rock melded with Fichtersperger effects. Halfway through the set, Neurosis's Von Till and Kelly returned to the stage to play live parts of the

absent KK Null, cranking out Godzila guitar riffs to test out the devastating attack from Tobata and Fujikake. The collaboration, more than a display of mutual respect, was monstrously good.

Judging from the number of Neurosis T-shirts in the audience, Neurosis's own onslaught was the centrepiece of the festival's second and third evening. A number of attendees looked like they had just climbed down from trees, sporting tribal tattoos, wild dreads, chest-length beards and bits of antler preening the nose and earlobe. But if the crowd's and group's appearance evoked a kind of Black Bloc eco-anarchism, Neurosis's own imagery, like the animated raven projected onto the screen behind them, heaved closer to a quasi-political goal that verges on the brink of eschatology. "With the wind at your back/And the light in your eyes," sang Von Till, evoking a heronian siring into a vision of apathy. The group attempted to infuse grindcore with the Ambient textures of their solo forays, with varying success. At their best, they hammered at crystalline turnings, almost sickly clean, building gut-jellying tension with smoky, discordant repetition. Their version of Metal seemed to shiver in place.

Where Neurosis embraced the massiveness of sound, Shellac used the stop-start rhythms of math rock to exploit pockets of silence, opposing the gaps with Steve Albini's shrill guitar glare. There was more going on, more willingness to accept self-parody as art (as in Bob Westan's "I am a virgin" T-shirt) and more of rock's traditional splendor, which may have explained the gleeful response of the unbridled half of the crowd. Still, it was an odd vision of rock, stripped of funk and bass, neither serious nor terribly funny in the end. Albini's guitar and voice sounded willfully whiny yet over-energetic, springing between indie rock's poles of self-indulgent Euro suppression and solipsistic, math rock sensibility.

Ins offered relatively straightforward yet turgid grindcore, punctuated with screams and scater

fringed bits, but obviously informed by their histories in New England Euro outfits. This, along with their clean cut looks, undercut the 'danger' generally attributed to Metal, suggesting that you too, with big enough arms and some clogs, could make this noise. Like much of Beyond The Pale, the festival's appearance illustrated one of the conundrums of Metal at the turn of the century: is it an identity politics, something fundamentally about lifestyle aesthetics or merely another sonic choice?

On the final night, Tarentel lumbered onto the stage as a Godspeed!-style ensemble, augmenting the current quagmire with cello, violin and members. After an extended isolationist passage of bowed cymbals, accordion, sustained strings and increasingly heavy guitar drones, Tarentel majestically resurrected two tracks from the Order Of Things. Their heurated rendition of Rickie Lee Jones' "Ghastly Head" returned gossamer guitar whispers with Wendy Allen's anguished voice, recalling the recombinant poetics of This Moral Coil. Tarentel's final number covered out of a labyrinthine bassline into a melodramatic orchestration of increasingly expressive strings, guitars, and percussion.

For the group's first US appearance in nearly ten years, Zoviet+France had parred its citizenship down to a lone ambassador, Ben Ponton, internationalist all music history and respecting it within the alienating frame of the looping cut-up. Along with a suitable arsenal of drones, Zoviet+France: compressed millennial pop, Rastler ghouls, VLF effects and even gabba breakbeats into a dense mess of swelling loops. For ambient music for hygienic states, the source material's rhythmic elements were caught in seacock pulses. Zoviet+France's only fault may have been offering too much information without enough stage presence, but at the same time, Ponton's pretence-free, studio glee persona offered a refreshing contrast to the theatricality of the festival. □

On Location

ARS ELECTRONICA LINZ VARIOUS VENUES

AUSTRIA
BY ANNE HILDE NEISSET

Now in its 14th year, the annual Pro Ars Electronica — Europe's electronic art equivalent of the Oscars — was awarded at the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation's studio in Linz, Upper Austria. As TV shows go, it made for peculiar viewing. The music comprises this year. Oval, Blectum from Blectum and Ryoji Ikeda (see the Wire 206 for Tony Hemminger's account of life as a Pro Ars Electronica jury member), were introduced by short video presentations, while the TV hosts cracked thival jokes to keep the audience from grabbing their remotes. How the work of such avantists got to be shown on what is essentially a telenovela is anyone's guess, but whatever, Ryoji Ikeda left \$10,000 richer clutching the Golden Nica prize, while Oval and Blectum from Blectum shared the second prize and collected \$5000 apiece. And Carsten Nicolai picked up an award for the second year running, when the Polar installation he created in collaboration with Slovenian artist Mario Pejhnik cleaned up in the Interactive Art category (last year he scored high with the 207-000 series of CDs released on his Baster-Noton imprint).

The awards ceremony is only a part of the annual Ars Electronica festival, however. Fanning out from the Ars Electronica Center, the installations, exhibitions, conferences, performances and workshops making up the week-long event occupy several venues in the centre of Linz, all of them in one way or another addressing this year's overarching theme. However, with its brief to "track the scenes, sites and protagonists of the art of tomorrow." So when it "electronic art" going? A panel debate following the awards ceremony, moderated by Asphodel's Nuri Hunton, gave the three winners 30 minutes each to provide answers. Markus Papp expressed a general fatigue with the mess

of Clicks + Cuts clones on the market. He also demonstrated his Ovalprocess, a Plogglass terminal housing his software. It's a flexible sound engine that can be modified by its users. Ryoji Ikeda's slot was filled by Tach supremo Joao Watercroft. Rather than touch upon Ikeda's work, he used it as a platform to expound his own despair at the "meaningless music we exist there." Making grudging digs at the likes of Kate Bush, Watercroft pointed the moral finger at the audience and called for a serious debate about the value of digital composition, and pinned for a music that dealt with life rather than its own production methods. "With every ten (books sold, five new glitch artists and seven labels appear" he said. "Cheap technology produces too much crap music. We are fucked by technology." What he made of West Coast laptop duo (and Kid666 affiliates) Blectum from Blectum went unrecorded. Blectum delivered an animated retelling of their mythology involving characters like the Sausa and a powdered Mallard, illustrated by a slideshow and backed up with a light-hearted software demo, in sharp contrast to previous speakers. Koven and Blewn's frosty attitude brought a much needed breath of fresh air to the day.

Artist and composer Gavin Lewis inaugurated the music programme with the premiere of his composition, *Two Jives*. A telephony play, for 200 preprogrammed mobile telephones dispersed around the audience, which Levin conducted from the stage like an orchestra. The 20 minute performance was impressively choreographed and surprisingly musical, given that it was made up of the collective roar of mangled Noises and Emissions. Exactly why someone would go the trouble of framing his "new" sounds, in mobile diatribes, inside the 300 year old format of a traditional symphony was lost on me. This was conservatism reimagined as innovation. More interesting events took place away from the concert hall.

Finish ex-drummer and electronic autodidact Viedalay Delav created a piece for the outdoor Klangpark, where large speakers are placed along the Danube, following the flow of the river. More sound design than music, his piece took in the position and speed of the speakers, projecting a rumble down the river, which was repeated every day in a loop for the duration of the festival. It was interrupted only by his live performance as Luomo, his sensual, mid House act featuring live vocals by his partner and Laub from a woman Arto Geis-Fuchs.

Golden Nica winner Ryoji Ikeda's performance consisted of his 'greatest hits' from 'A' and 'D'. The Japanese master of extreme minimal digital's trademark Hises and gultes combined with synchronised graphics and high speed video sequences to create an experience that was as intense as it was intimate. It felt as though Ikeda had compressed all the world's noises into tiny power points, organised in a meticulous grid system, below it climaxed with a stroboscopic crash.

Krafwerk in a samiré style was the best thing to happen in Containerpark, formerly a huge industrial steelworks notorious for using slave labour during the Second World War. Today, a triangular pyramid tent housed Sefor Coconut, six Use Wom Heart! Vietnam and his monas shaking, alcohol twisting trapeze of entertainers. He received a rapturous reception from a crowd evidently hungover for real instruments after yet another daylong electronics bangle.

The DK centre for contemporary art housed the festival's 'Globe Arts' component. Most impressive of the sound installations was 'Spatio Sounds', by Dutch artist Edwin Van Der Heide and Marna De Nijl. Their complex piece of engineering essentially involved a speaker inserted into a large concrete block mounted on a metal rod spinning in a circle and interacting with visitors. American artist Paul De Munno's

Rain Dance created melodies from the pressure of simulated falling rain on a plastic umbrella.

For the last night's final showdown, Carsten Nicolai and Ryoji Ikeda joined forces as Cyclo, their powerful sets tore down. Much greater than their respective solo work, Cyclo took digital snare as his main sound source. Accompanied by retro style hi-fi and green visuals recalling oldy CDs, databanks and MS-DOS graphics, their majesty anorexic feast was highly stimulating. Blasted from a precision engineered sound system, anything in the bass register set my trousseau quivering.

Ryoji Ikeda might have walked away with this Ars Electronica's main prize, but the popular vote went to Blectum from Blectum, the absolute high point of the festival. Joined at the hip in a specially designed costume, the female duo dropped all inhibitions to produce a perverse, frenetic and whiplash ecotop set, complete with home movie visuals, of unbridled exuberance. With a sample range referencing more pop than the new Moulin Rouge flick, Kid666's splatterfunk was almost as exhilarating. This time his main focus was clearly on Missy Elliott, chewing up and spitting out large chunks of "Get Ur Freak On" at the cheering crowd. Taking time out of his European tour with Björk, Lesser followed with a stunning set of apocalyptic girdons, largely performed on a CD-DJ machine with a scorching function. Grabbing a nearby microphone, he ended his 45 minutes of digital mayhem with a garbled black metal roar that left the audience dumbstruck. For the festival's finale, Blectum, Lesser and Kid666 came together as Fleetwood Macintosh to perform hits like Tina Turner's "Private Dancer" and A-ha's "Take On Me". But Blectum from Blectum's postcard "Sad Music" summed up the festival best: "There's bad music everywhere/there's bad music in the air/I'm gonna fuck the music into the ground/bad music is grand/like a piano/if you like it." □

BOUBACAR TRAORE BERKELEY ASHKENAZ

USA
BY RICHARD HENDERSON

When Boubacar Traore began his recording career in the newly independent African nation of Mali in 1963, he played local versions of whatever dance style was then popular in the West, whether it was the twist or the jerk. Dancers in the neighborhoods of Bamako adored him, making his versions of the Madison or the Malt twist into local hits. He personified the youth revolution in urban Mali, whose young people were bent on adapting Western pop culture for local use. As Traore noted in his exhortation to a recently published collection of 80s nightclub photography by courtierman Malick Sidibé, "The European twist and the Malt twist were different, but people danced then the same way."

In his own words, Kar Kar (Traore had been a

footballer; his nickname stems from kar kar, meaning "one who dribbles too much") played "jazz, rumbas, merengues, cha-cha-cha, salsa... you name it" while his star was in the ascendant. Then, in 1967, a cultural revolution erupted from the Malian landscape. Clubs were closed, favourite records were impounded, restrictions were placed on women's dress. Boubacar Traore set up shop as a tailor and forgot about music for the next two decades. Such was the cultural void left by his absence that most of his fans assumed he'd died. However, a chance appearance on Malian television in the late 80s revived interest in Traore, leading to the extraordinary second act in his career that continues to the present.

Recordings such as the recent *Maître* (Label Bleu) show that his formula has withstood the passage of time. His transposition of the two-fingered picking technique initially developed for the kora (a large gourd harp, the national

instrument of Mali) remains his enduring contribution to the acoustic guitar's armory. Shy, sketched and sprung, Kar Kar packs the energy of an electric guitar into his unadorned performances, as his stand at Berkeley's Ashkenaz club proves.

In another reminder of the connection between Mali's folk music and American blues, Traore is introduced by Bonnie Raitt, who describes him and his accompanist as the "rockin'-est band in this town tonight." At first glimpse, the duo hardly promise to live up to her extravagant description. Two gems in snap-brim caps amble onstage, the sleep-looking Kar Kar staying in the rear and the other, percussionist Sidiki Caramba, positioning himself foreground next to a very large overturned gourd drum. Over the course of their two hour plus set, however, the unlikely pair proceed to do exactly what Raitt promised: they rock the place, with riffs splashing from Raitt's fingers and Caramba

— a born comedian who pulls shamelessly together through the evening — giving a full drum felt's sound from his single gourd with the nuanced skill of a table player.

The Berkeley crowd (their own dance moves evenly adapted from Hong Kong director Loui Hark's martial arts films), are on their side from the off, cheering the intro of each new song, though it's unlikely that any of them really recognise them, as many of the numbers are drawn from Traore's earlier careers. But their cheers are testament to the winning sound that Kar Kar has refined over the years, not to mention his amiability. The audience reaction also speaks words about the speaker means by which music can succeed: Traore's presence is a potent reminder of a time, long ago, when a singer-songwriter armed with only a guitar could stem like James Brown, score his singles and move bodies to dance. □

Clockwise from top left: Shellac's Steve Albini, Zeni Geva with Scott Kelly, Michael Gira of Beyond The Pale; Electric From Blechdorn and Luomo at Ars Electronica



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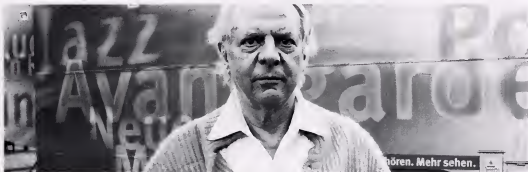
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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to listings@thewire.co.uk

Deadline for November issue: Friday 12 October



Electronic high priest: Stockhausen at London Barbican

UK Festivals

BELFAST 39TH FESTIVAL

BELFAST
Jazz and improv related events at this city festival include the 20-piece Jazz Jamaica Allstars (27 October), Dave Douglas's Witness project featuring Basia (3 November), local improvisation group When Heads Collide (8) and Fred Hersch's 4 in Perspective with Kenny Wheeler and Norma Winstone. Various venues, times and prices, 028 90 667 687, www.belfastfestival.com

THE CUTTING EDGE: TOPOLOGIES

LONDON
Series of contemporary music concerts promoted by the British Music Information Centre, including works by and dedicated to James Dillon (4 October), Venetian plays music by Harrison Birtwistle and others (11), guitarist Tim Brady plays works by himself and Jeremy Peyter Jones, and the Smith Quartet plays works by Tim Souther, Gavin Bryans and Howard Skempton (18); Larus Chen plays piano works by Cornelius Cardew and Michael Parsons (25, 26pm); and Apartment House play works by Laurence Crane and James Clarke (26, 7.30pm). The series continues in November. London The Warehouse, 020 7499 8567, www.bmic.co.uk

ELECTRONIC

LONDON
Co-sponsored by The Wire and Radio 3, this major Barbican festival offers a rare opportunity to hear some of Katharina Stockhausen's greatest electronic works in performances that will be directed by the composer himself and feature his own ensemble. The concert programme breaks down thus: *Nyctem* (13 October), *Seven Scenes from Light* (14, 5.30pm), *Electronic Studies 1 & 2*, *Song of the Youths*, *Reveries* and *Kontakte* (14, 10pm) and *Friday from Light* (15). In addition to

conducting, Stockhausen will be in attendance each night to give pre-concert talks. The festival has an extensive 'supporting' programme that includes DJ Preacher G Jones aka Aphex Twin playing an Ambient DJ set in the Barbican's topical conservatory (14); a night hosted by the Twers Replicas label featuring Bogdan Raczynski, Robert Normandeau and Pierre Bastien (15); Kevin Singh duetting with Jon Hassell; and London Sinfonietta playing new work by Massimo Attack's arranger Craig Armstrong (16); and William Orbit playing new work through Stockhausen's surround sound system (18). There is also a related strand of short films with electronic soundtracks scored by Pulp's Mark Webber, which will feature a live soundtrack performance by Phil Niblock (14), a sound installation by ex-Can keyboard player Imani Schmitt and Kuno, a free concert hosted by the SPHM, education projects and talks. London Barbican, 13-18 October. times/press vey, 020 7638 8891, www.barcican.org.uk

EXTRASENSORY

LONDON
Multimedia arts collective launches its first exhibition and international concert series. The concerts use electronic to explore sound and space and feature CM Von Hauswail and Paul Spreckley (11 October), Francisco López and Immedio (12), Fantasmagorina, Dave Carter and Joe Watson and Blasibody (13). Meanwhile, eight installations explore the full space of the festival venue, a converted neo-Gothic church. London 291 Gallery, 11-17 October. 020 7613 5676, www.extrasensory.org

FOURTH FRACTURE FESTIVAL OF IMPROVISED MUSIC

LIVERPOOL
Self-explanatory event featuring Nought (3 October), May Molano & Phil Molano (4), Lol Cochrill & Michael Kosmidis (5), Ian Bawa/John Butcher (6), Elektrohead featuring Neil Campbell and friends (9), Keith Tippett (11),

Hesaton/Wilkinson/Foil (12) and John Bisset/Rhoda Davies/Phil Morley (13). Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre and Jump Ship Rot, festival pass £20/£17, 0151 260 9628, www.fracturefestival.co.uk

MIND YOUR HEAD

LONDON
Four nights of psychedelic and acid flashbacks on the South Bank courtesy of The Oxi, Gong and Acid Mothers Temple (13 October), Hawkwind and Add N to 4 (14), Faust and Gary Lucas (15), The Pretty Things play SF Sonnet with guest narrator Arthur Brown, and Robyn Hitchcock and The Soft Boys play Underwater Moonlight (16). London Royal Festival Hall, 020 7360 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

OX1

OXFORD
This self-styled Festival of Vibrations and Oscillations provides a platform for emerging and established artists who work outside of conventional art practices. The event includes performances, installations, sound art, screenings, site specific work and symposia. Artists include Kaffe Matthews, Simon Fisher-Turner & Scanner, Brian Catling, Bruce Gilchrist & Jerry Bradley, David Bean, Aveni Shalun and many others. 25-27 October, festival pass £8/£120, day passes £15/£10, 01865 484957, www.oxford-artsociety.com

International Festivals

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

USA
The UK festival relocates to Los Angeles, this time curated by Sonic Youth. Highlights include Television, Derek Bailey, Fred Anderson (the spoken word by Lydia Lunch and others (19 October), Jay Spencer Blasius' *Dead*, *Swordsmen*, Tony Conrad, David G, Cecil Taylor,

Luc Ferrari with DJ Olive, Ikue Mon with Kim Gordon and Jim O'Rourke, Papa M, Mats Gustafsson, Willem Wijnant, Thurston Moore, Pita and Farnese (20), Sonic Youth, Stereolab, La Tige, Peaches and Cinnamon Da. Los Angeles UCLA, 001 310 825 2101, www.wyatthead.com/atp/

STOP.SPOT FESTIVAL

ALUSTRIA
Hard-edged electronic event featuring Techno Annel, Silkipolystepa, Amb-Pop Consortium, Andreas Tillander, Recherzentrum, Cosm, Portor Ricks and others, 26-27 October, Linz OK-Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, www.ok-centrum.at

ELECTROGRAPH 01

GREECE
The first edition of this sound art festival is being staged in an underground railway tunnel and features General Magic, Thomas Koerner, Hecker, Ikon, Francisco López, as11, Felix Kubler as well as screenings of films by experimental Finnish directors. Athens tunnel between Syntagma station and Monastiraki station inside the new Metro line, 18-20 October, www.electrograph.gr

ELEKTRONIKALOIDA

SPAIN
Annual electronic music festival in San Sebastian on the Iberian north coast. Artists include Jaki Leinhardt and Bernd Freemann, Jasek Shaefer, Pole, Markus Nikolas and Cleo Deirich, Kirk Degregorio, Revolutionary Dub Warriors and more. Donostia-San Sebastian, 5-7 October, various venues, www.elektronikaldia.org

ENCUENTROS DE MUSICA EXPERIMENTAL

PORTUGAL
Improvisation and composition mix freely at the second edition of this Atlantic event. Featured artists include Kaffe Matthews, Carlos Zingales, Carlos Santos, Marcús Lopes and many others. Setúbal Inatel, 22-24 October. 00 35 265 522 205, josequimil.com



FRETWORK

with MICHAEL CHANCE,
NICHOLAS DANIEL and DANCERS
THE HIDDEN FACE CATHEDRAL TOUR

The ethereal resonance of viola, counterbass and oboe give voice to the music of John Woolrich, Orlando Gough, John Tavener, Michael Nyman and Tan Dun with specially commissioned choreography by Ian Spink.

Performed mostly in cathedrals and churches, this specially commissioned tour features two world premiere live performances that incorporate pieces from the 20th and 21st centuries with early motifs.

'No one can doubt Fretwork's pre-eminence as one of Britain's leading chamber ensembles of any description.' GRAMOPHONE

On Tour November 2001

Fri 2 HASTINGS St Mary-in-the-Castle
01424 781624

Sat 3 LANCASTER The Great Hall
0800 028 3042

Sun 4 BRISTOL Cathedral
0117 926 4879

Mon 5 CHELTENHAM St Matthew's Church
01242 227979

Tue 6 LONDON Union Chapel
0870 120 1349

Wed 7 BIRMINGHAM St Alban's Highgate
'870 241 6441

Fri 9 SHEFFIELD Cathedral
0114 263 6077

Sat 10 LIVERPOOL Metropolitan Cathedral
0151 708 7283 / 01-709 9222

www.cmntours.org.uk



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Remy Vignolo / Clarence Penn

01 THE SWANSEA SPA
SUN 18 London
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
020 7960 4242

MON 19 Brighton
DOME (PAVILION THEATRE)
01273 709709

TUE 20 Oxford
ST BARNABAS CHURCH
0870 750 0659

THU 22 Huddersfield
LAWRENCE BATLEY THEATRE
01484 330528

FRI 23 Birmingham
CBSO CENTRE
0121 767 4050

SAT 24 Kendal
BREVARTY ARTS CENTRE
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Out October on Dryden Jazz
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Out There



AMM's Keith Rowe

FCMM

CANADA
Major North American film festival with an excellent music programme part-curated by The Wire. The magazine's Underground Resistance night features Kid606, Anti-Pop Consortium, Jettison and The Wire Sound System (13 October). Other performance highlights in a packed bill include a DJ set by The Wire contributor Philip Sherburne (12), a performance of The User's Second Symphony for Dot Matrix Printers (13), a Touch evening with Christian Fennest, Phil Niblock, Hazard and Jon Wozniak (18), a collaborative work by Bob Ostertag and live animation artist Pierre Hebert (19), and a closing night concert with David Safety Scissors, Sutekh and Seed (20). Montreal various venues, 12-20 October, www.fcmm.com

GÖTEBORG ART SOUNDS

SWEDEN
Genuinely eclectic New Music festival includes performances by Tan Dun with The Göteborg Symphony Orchestra, Mats Gustafsson, Joey Baron, Supercollider, Apartment House, Aditi Quintero. Set music from Istanbul and Paris, Carsten Nicolai, Ryoji Ikeda, Ictus Fauriol & Zbigniew Karwowski, To Rococo Rot, Granular Synthesis, Akos Romani, Kevin Drumm, Leri Elggen, London Sinfonietta and Göteborg's Militant Jazz Musicians. There is also an exhibition by CM Von Haussoff, a lecture by David Toop and various sound art performances out on the streets. Göteborg, various venues, 6-13 October, www.ges-festival.com

LEM

SPAIN
The fifth edition of the International Experimental Music Festival features Carl Stone, Ravi Saikrishna Quartet, Osakono, Derek Bailey & Hideo Hasegawa and many others. Girona-Barcelona, 00 34 932 373737, www.girona-tornton.com

MEREDITH MONK

IRELAND
A series of events celebrating the works of the enchanted vocal artist and composer, including two day-long workshops, a solo vocal performance, and a screening of her films. Dublin Irish Modern Dance Theatre, 27-31 October, 00 353 1 874 9616, www.irishmodernandcancetheatre.com

NO MUSIC FESTIVAL

USA
The Nihilist Spasm Band's logic-busting noise festival comes to New York. The extensive line-up includes Boris Tompa, Wapcapottia, Shaking Ray Lewis, Christian Marclay, Thurston Moore, Jero Lindsay, CMC, Reynolds, Hekadada with Kim Gordon and more. New York, 11-14 October, 001 212 249 8950 x463, www.nmusic107.com

SOUND FIELD

USA
Gene Coleman curated this festival of new and experimental music. This year's featured composers are Luc Ferrari (1-7 October), Salvatore Sciaccino (8-13), Jennifer Watcche and Julia Miller (16), Steffen Schlemmermacher (17-23), Franz Hautzinger and Geese Coleman (28), Burkhard Stangl and Werner Doleidecker (30)

and an architectural/sound installation by Simpson with music by Kevin Drumm. Groups and special guests include Ensemble Noemnesia, David Grubbs, Martin Titmuss, Ian Pace, Tom Kaprielian, Vincent Royer, Pos-Neg, Paula Alvarez, drag, Amy Williams, Michael Moser, Julia Bentley and others. Chicago various venues, times and prices, 001 773 973 2501

Special Events

AMM WEEKEND

IRELAND
A two-day event dedicated to the legendary noise improvisation trio. On the Friday afternoon John Tilbury gives a lecture on contemporary piano while Eddie Prevost gives a limited capacity improvisation workshop; in the evening there is a performance by the workshop group as well as a solo set by guitarist Keith Rowe (26 October). On the Saturday John Tilbury plays an afternoon concert of work by Morton Feldman and Conditus Cardew, and AMM and the event with an evening concert (27). Dublin Project, various times and prices, 00 353 1 679 6622, www.whisperinggallery.com

ANGELS OF THE UNIVERSE

The Fredrik Friidhultson film soundtrack by Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson and Sigur Rós tours, alongside screenings of two Sigur Rós videos. Brighton Duke of York (1 October), Oxford Phoenix Picture House (2), Bristol Watershed (3), Cardiff Chapter (4), Manchester Cornerhouse (6), Birmingham MAC (10), London Horse Hospital (11), Nottingham Broadway (12).

Sheffield Showroom (13), Edinburgh Filmhouse (15), Glasgow Film House (16)

BANG ON A CAN MARATHON

USA
Eight hours of music by over 100 performers from 11 countries put together by the New York New Music crew. Bang On A Can All-Stars. Highlights include Iva Popasov's ecstatic Bulgarian wedding band, Newband performing works on Harry Partch's original instruments, Arnold Brecht's Orchestra Of Exotic Strings' otherworldly Just Intonation works, plus musicians from China, Africa and Burma. New York Brooklyn Academy of Music, 20 October, 2-10PM, 001 212 206 1480

BROKEN MUSIC + ULTRA

UK
Two music and film events. Broken Music is a collection of videos focussing on the music of Sonic Youth, Christian Marclay, Voice Crack, Sienna Veselka and Barry Schwartz (3 October). Ultra are the Czech film-action-performance group whose multi-screened and fragmented films are augmented with live improvised music (6). London La Cinema, 020 7804 0201

CCA

UK
To celebrate the redevelopment of Glasgow's dedicated arts venue, Diamanda Galas, Herbert Henck, John Tilbury, Marc Couroux and Ian Pace will be playing live, plus there will be a series of 'Sound Commissions' by Evan Parker, Sinead Pimms, Tim Brady and London's Sparrow club. Glasgow CCA, 25 October, 0141 352 4900, www.cca-glasgow.com

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ENCUENTROS DE MÚSICA EXPERIMENTAL

INATEL - 22/24h
4 OCTUBER

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SETUBAL PORTUGAL

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- > Ulrich Mitzlaff
- > Pedro Leal
- > Victor Colimbra
- > Gregg Moore
- > Vitor Joaquim
- > Carlos Zingaro
- > Kaffie Matthews

concerto MURRAY KAP
conduzido por

- > Gregg Moore
- > Carlos Zingaro
- > Kaffie Matthews

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frakture

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October 2001

3rd Nought (@ Jump Ship Rat Gallery)
4th Before Touch
5th Lol Coxhill/Michael Kosmides
6th Inside Out (John Butcher/Ian Birse)
9th ELEKTROHEAD (Michel Bestmann/José's Fish)
11th Keith Tippett/Peter Fairclough
12th Hession/Wilkinson/Fell
13 Chwareteg (John Bisset/Rhodri Davies/Phil Morton)

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THE ORB & GONG

Special Guests
ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE
Wed 3 Oct RFH 7pm

HAWKWIND

Special Guests ADD N TO X
Wed 10 Oct RFH 8pm

FAUST

Special Guest GARY LUCAS
Fri 12 Oct RFH 7.30pm

DOUBLE BILL

THE PRETTY THINGS

play the first ever public LIVE performance of
SF Sorrow, narrator ARTHUR BROWN
special guest

DAVID GILMOUR (PINK FLOYD)

THE SOFT BOYS

play Underwater Moonlight
feat. Robyn Hitchcock
Kimberly Rowe, Matthew Seligman
Morris Windsor
Fri 19 Oct RFH 8pm

sbc

Göteborg Art Sounds contemporary music festival 6-13 October 2001

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Göteborgs Symfoniker
Ten Dun New York
to rococo rot Berlin
Senore Ars Ludi Rome

John Taylor London
Anders Jormin Göteborg
Joey Baron New York
Apartment House London
Granular Synthesis Vienna
Ake Rosmann Stockholm

Kevin Drumm Chicago
Leif Elggren Stockholm
Mats Gustafsson Stockholm

Kommunensamband Stockholm
Gunilla Leander Stockholm
Carsten Nicolai, Ryoji Ikeda Berlin
Einar Nielsen Göteborg
Mikael Lundberg Stockholm
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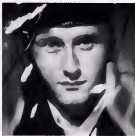
AVANTO

HELSINKI MEDIA ART FESTIVAL 6.-11.11.2001

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Live performances: Dome Yoshitake (JPN) - Sechie M (JPN) - Toshimaru Nakamura (JPN) - Filament (JPN) - Farmers Manual (AUT) - Ikusa (JPN) - [The User] (CAN) - Comee (UK) - ZGA (RUS) - Abney Benson (RUS) - Circle (FIN) - Op! Beards & Kan Aronpuro (FIN) - Pekka Arakainen & Es (FIN) - Keskhot (FIN) - Shogun Kuntola (FIN) - The Wire Sound System (UK) - Dotcom's Mark & Anapise (UK/FRA) - Ilos (GR) - DJ massem Lindfors (FIN) - DJ paves (FIN) - more

Moving image: Martho Arnold (AUT) - Craig Baldwin (USA) - Ian Hildwell (UK) - Kristian Pein/Jean Rod/Johan Soderberg (SWE) - Gustav Destach (AUT) - Tony Conrad (USA) - Paul Kaiser (USA) - Jost Reinhold (NL) - Sam conductor (UK) - Peter Kubelka (AUT) - Robert Brer (USA) - Malcolm Le Grice (UK) - Le Rhodes (UK) - Shirley Clarke (USA) - Jan Hanigara (FIN) - Pekka Sassi (FIN) - more



Jan Wobble

LOL COXHILL & FRIENDS

UK
The stars of the improvising community turn out to celebrate the launch of a double CD retrospective of the music of Lol Coxhill. Coxhill will appear in various groupings throughout the evening. London Red Rose, 31 October, 8pm, £5/£4, 020 7263 7265.

CRASS AUCTION

UK
Auction to raise money for the Crass commune, Oial House. Rare material by Crass, Gae Vaydich, David Tibet, Tortoise, Re/Search and Joe Dillworth will be going under the hammer. London Horse Hospital, the exhibition of works runs 17-27 October, midday-6pm, with a launch party (17) and final bid party (27).

DAVID JOHNSTON IN KING KONG

UK
David Johnston features in a new video by Berlin based artist Peter Frencl. London Chiswick House Gallery, 3 October-4 November, 0991 4518, www.chiswickhouse.org.uk

ARNOLD DREYBLATT

USA
The US minimalist composer presents a multimedia installation, *The Re-Collection Mechanism*, based on biographies from *Who's Who in Central & Eastern Europe 1933*. New York Jewish Museum, 19 January 2002, 001 212 423 3200, www.dreyblatt.net

FREE FALL

UK
Lauch party for Resonance FM & Peter Cusack's *Your Favourite London Sound*, a collection of atmospheric location recordings, in the company of various local musicians, VJs, and psychogeographic slideshow by Wye contributor David Mandl. London Conway Hall, 12 October, 7pm, free, info@resonancefm.co.uk

MIXMASTERS.TV

UK
ITV1 and ActiveTV have commissioned a series of 13 30 minute Q/V/Ks for late night television. Visual artists include O-Fuse, Light Surgeons and Heston and musical mass come from the Park, Rephlex, Hospital, Botch & Scaper and Hydrogen Oxide. Labels, TV, weekly from 28th September, screens 2 30am

CARSTEN NICOLAI

LONDON
Sound and visual installations by Raster-Noton boss and the man behind MfW Plateaux at Aya. Note, at this South London white cube gallery. E.Mich, 26 October, Thursdays-Sunday 1-6 pm,

free, 0207 735 7334, mail@emich.co.uk. It concludes with Nicola's first UK solo performance (26 October, E.Mich, tickets from Rough Trade, 020 7240 0103)

RADICAL FASHION

UK
Novel installations by leading fashion designers including Alexander McQueen, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Comme des Garçons, Jean Paul Gaultier, Vivienne Westwood, Helmut Lang and more, with sound accompaniments curated by *The Wire's* David Toop. Contributing musicians include Björk, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Paul Schütze, Kim Cascone, Ken Ikeda, Akira Rikibeles, Christophe Charles, Max Eastley, Oliver Alary, Yoshino Hame, Yohji Yamamoto and Toop himself. V&A Museum, 18 October-6 January 2002, £5, 020 7942 2000, www.vam.ac.uk

THE WIRE SESSIONS LIVE: VANDERMARK'S

Kicking off the second series of concerts on London's South Bank, hosted by this magazine, is what promises to be an incendiary performance by the high-energy Chicago jazz combo led by saxophonist Ken Vandermark. London Purcell Room, 22 October, 8pm, £12.50/£10, 020 7980 4242. In addition to the London date, Vandermark's also play Leeds Wadsworth (17 October), Gateshead Caidmore Hall (18), Birmingham MAC (20)

On Stage

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE & THE MELTING PARANISO UFO + CIRCLE

Wayward Japanese psychedelic rockers return for a major tour supported by Finnish drone merchants. Oxford The Point (4 October), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (5), Newcastle Upon Tyne Cumberland Arms (6), Edinburgh The Venue (7), Glasgow 13th Note (8), Manchester Based On The Wall (10), Nottingham The Social (11), Wolverhampton The Varsity (12), Brighton Concord 2 (15), London Spot (16). In addition, AMT guest here Makoto Kawabata performs three extra dates with his Nishinomiya trio at Manchester Star & Carter (9), Birmingham Jug Of Ice (13), and London Upstairs at the Garage (14)

LAURIE ANDERSON

Conceptual artist, violinist and wordsmith performs work from her new album *Life On A String*. Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (2 October), Bristol Coston Hall (3), London Royal Festival Hall (5)

JELLO BIAFRA

Spoken word performance from the former Dead Kennedy's frontman. London Astoria, 4 October, £8, 020 7434 9592

FAUST

Original New Yorkers on tour. Milton Keynes Woughton Centre (6 October), Brighton Concord 2 (7), Newcastle Opera House (8), Edinburgh Liquid Rooms (9), Leeds Ish Centre (10), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (11), London Royal Festival Hall (12)

RICHELIE HAWTIN

Plastic piano person. Birmingham Acoustic Jam (13 October), Leeds The Orbit (also 13), Dublin Ambassador Theatre (20), Birmingham Custard Factory (30)

ELVIN JONES'S BIG BAND

Ex-Caltrane drummer. London Barbican, 8 October, 7:30pm, £20/£10, 020 7638 8891

FUTURE PLOT AKA

Sashli Dad's curious experimental pop project. London 93 Feet East, 18 October, 020 7247 3293

DI MORPHEUS

Freezone label founder tours in support of his new compilation, *London Dags* (27 October, with Marmar Marmar), album launch party at London The Theatre (28) and London Havel (2 November), with Pete Herbert & Jools Butlerfield

NEIL LANDSTRUM

Brexit-in-based Texas label techno head tours. Edinburgh venue 26 (5 October), London Elektra (10), Bristol Future Funk (27), Leeds Orbit (17), Birmingham House of God (23)

LYDIA LUNCH + SHOCK HEADED

PETERS
Lunch's spoken word is accompanied by Terry Edwards and supported by Karl Blake's Gony songs. London 93 Feet East, 8 October, 7:30-11pm, £7.50, 020 7247 3293

NINJA TUNE PRESENTS...

Six nights of Solid Steel featuring DJ Food & DJ, Bonobo, Ollie Teeba and Juke MC Aleem. Newcastle University (17 October), Manchester Planet K (18), Glasgow Art School (19), Cardiff University (20), London Cargo (25), Leeds Warehouse (26)

NUITERS WITH ATTITUDE

Launch event for the Mad Pride CD of the same name. To quote from its manifesto, Mad Pride seeks to "celebrate madness in all its forms as a means to all-out social revolution". Performers include Alternative TV, Ceramic Horse and Sunny McKennas. London The Garage, 1 October, 8pm

entrance includes free copy of the CD, 020 7607 1818

ONENESS OF JUJU

Rare UK dates from James "Plunky" Branch and his tribe of African Rhythmatists. Brighton Corn Exchange (25 October), London Jazz Cafe (26), Leeds Wadsworth (27)

KIMMO POHONEN

Finnish accordionist returns with a new project, Kiister. London Blackheath Concert Halls, 25 October

RADIO TARIFA

Southern Spanish group explore their Arabic, Jewish, Moorish and Afro influences. London Barbican, 24 October, 8:30pm, 020 7638 8891, www.barcican.org.uk

SOLEA

Elisabeth Esselink and her merry band, London 93 Feet East, 2 October, 020 7247 3293

STRINGS WITH EVAN PARKER

The improvising saxophone colossus performs with an ad hoc orchestra of excited string players. London St Michael & All Angels Church, 11 October, 8pm, £6/£5, 020 8348 9595

TRANS AM & THE FUCKING CHAMPS

US post-rockers tour with Melodic instrumentalists. Brighton Volo Club (14 October), Southwark (15), Newport (16), Birmingham The Flagship & Friar (17), Liverpool (18), Dublin Wharfedale (19), Cork The Lobby (20), Limerick (21), Belfast (22), Glasgow 13th Note Club (23), Dundee On Air East (24), Edinburgh Wee Red Bar (25) Leeds The Brindell (26) Nottingham The Beat Club (27) Exeter (28), London 93 Feet East (29)

VAN BEBBER/HELMUT LEMKE

Raw improvisation duo tour. York The Black Swan (2 October), Sheffield The Grapes (3), Salford Chapel Street Open Festival (5-7), Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre (8)

JAH WOBBLE'S SOLARIS

Former P.L. bassman returns to the road on a Contemporary Music Network tour sponsored by The Wire with a new group featuring Harold Budd, Jane Leacock, Bill Lawwell and comet player Graham Haynes. London Ocean (21 October), Glasgow The Arches (22), Manchester Central Theatre (23), Leeds The Wadsworth (24), Mendal Brewery Arts Centre (25), Brighton Dome (27), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (28), www.cmntours.org.uk

Club Spaces

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

Morphy electronics night. This month Future

Out There

Sound Of London enter the booth for a one off DJ set. London Embassy Bar, 19 October, 8pm-1am, £3

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Dense drones from Dual, vocals and toys from UK's Anna Hensler, audio visual project from Melbourne, Impen from Caledonia, 2, released songs from A Girl Called Gem, and songs with a beatbox from MC Richard Sanderson. London 12 Bar Club, 28 October, 8pm, £6, 020 7916 6969

CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Matthea club night with a strong visual identity and a wide and discerning music policy. London Herald, 9 & 23 October, 7:30pm-2am, free, 020 7613 4462

CONSUME

American vocalists and toy player Anna Hensler in duet with Tichik's Richard Sanderson plus Hassle House. Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 8:30-midnight, 26 October, 04, 0141 593 1638, www.consume.liveserve.co.uk

EATOMKS

The Sork Catering Band cook up – literally – a live soundtrack to Marco Ferreri's rarely seen scabrous *Two Class*. La Grande Rouffe. London Tyneside Studios, 21 October, 6pm-midnight, £7/£5, 020 7613 3001

HUSTLIN'

Hip-hop theory with resident DJ Danny Delta, DJ Cyrus and Pete Nuphrink, who'll also be vinyl, plus guests. London Mondo Jolas, last Thursday of every month, 10pm-3am, £3/£5, 07801 783666, www.madamejolas.com

INSTANT MUSIC MEETING

"Electro/experimental sound/song series" at two venues: Voltage and Noise (Francisco (5 October), Stern/Guerra/Matt/Hood, Music Group Music collective and Last 7 Mondes (12), Lab and Neisy Michel (19), Niso Soup, Roddy Mouski and Ken Shavers (26), London October, 8:30-11pm, £4/£3, Plus, Sean O'Hagan, Anna Hensler/Steve Bensford/Richard

Sanderson Toss, Shogun Woods, Bit Tonic and guests. London Hat on Wall, 20 October, 8pm, £3/£4, info paul@hwall.demon.co.uk

KAKUTOPIA

Off the wall. Improv. Helmut Lankin and Klaus Van Babbler, Pleasure-Deriving Improvers and Gwilym Edwards (2 October) and sax, aka Gwilym Edwards/Richard Bowers/Ian Watson (19). York Black Swan, 8pm, £3/£2, www.kakutopia.com

KLINKER

Packaged bits of improvised music, poetry and performance. Enoch Da-Eso, Laboratories, The Particles (4 October), Gabriel Keene Toss, Ian Bense & Laura Kwang, FO Batman and Duff (11), They Came From The Sea, Podlet, Peter Beverley & Keith Bay (18), Ya Basta, Paolo Angel, Ben The Wendy (26), El Sid and Ian Hinchliffe (27). London The Sussan, 020 8896 8216, www.thelinker.liveserve.co.uk

KOSMISCHE

Kinobrock and more at a club which recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. Also over this month: Capital K live plus DJs (London upstairs at the Garage, 29 September, £5, 020 7607 1818); Nishin-hon + Circle (14 October, 7:30pm, £6); and Khan & Kai Congo Powers plus DJs (London 93 Feet East, 28, 8pm-2am, £7, 020 7247 3293). Web: www.kosmische.org

PEDESTRIAN

Oddball electronics and more. Manitoba live plus Microturb Shock & Jamie Hensler two-DJ set. Bristol Art Bar, 7 October, 7pm-1am, £1

PIPE & PASTRY

Bohman Brothers' haunt for improvised and leftfield music. The Motion Sickness Majoriste Show, Dave Fowler, Julia Doyle/Sue Honeyman/Gil Marshall and We're Breaking Up (8 October), Steve Nade & Neil Wilkinson, Echo Ark (22), Transmissions Of Not, Ian Smith/Dave Tucker/Simon H (29). London Burlington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

SONIC MOOK EXPERIMENT

Sean McCuskey's electronics London club night hits the road with a gaggle of star guests in live. London 93 Feet East (29 September), Nottingham Social (2 October), Cardiff Truans (25), Glasgow CCA (26), London ICA (28)

SOUND 323

Afternoon improv inside this North London record shop. Sylvia Halsett (6 October), Simon Vincent & Graham Halliwell (13), and Anthony Braxator associate Scott Rosenberg (20). London Sound 323, Saturdays, 3pm, £3, 020 8348 9095

THE SPRAWL

Electronic sounds in an internet cafe. Audio-visual glitchy improv from Tichik plus resident DJ Bit Tonic and S-(cut)-ds, plus vocals by Waveform. London Global Cafe, 4 October, 7:30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 0207 267 2242, www.djase.com/sprawl/

X CHROMOSOMES

Women in electronic event promoted by the Law & Auster label. London 93 Feet East, 2, 16 & 30 October, 8-11pm, free, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

Incoming

ATLANTIC WAVES

LONDON

One-off London festival spread across eight nights and devoted to showcasing the current state of new and experimental Portuguese music. Portuguese performers include Rodrigo Leao, Misa, Palop Alca, Teledu and Carlos Zingaro, the latter two appearing in collaborations with Eddie Prévost and Tom Chant and Matt Ward and Mick Beck respectively. London various venues, 2-29 November, www.atlanticwaves.org

AVANTO

FINLAND

Helsinki's Media Art Festival this year has a

Japanese bias with performers including Otomo Yoshitake, Ruins, Sachiko M, Toshimaru Nakamura and Flimint alongside Farmers Manual, ZGA, The User, Opi 1, Bastards, Kari Anzures and others. A full programme of films includes work by Terry Cornell, Craig Bolotin, Malcolin Le Gnee and Jack Smith. Helsinki, 5-11 November, www.avantofestival.com

WHERE OPPOSITES ATTRACT?

UK

The first of what promises to be an annual festival in which the audience chooses improving groupings from a pool of performers. The inaugural event includes Caroline Kraebel, Richard Thomas, The Bohman Brothers, reSpence, Paul Hood, London Toy Orchestra, Hugh Metcalf, Yami Hara, Viri Cunningham and many others. London Shepherds Bush Village Hall, 3 November, midday-7pm

TAMPERE JAZZ HAPPENING

FINLAND

Three days of high-end jazz and improv including Jari Campbell, Sam Rivers, New Scapephone Quartet, The Hawks, Milford Graves, Barry Guy New Orchestra, John Ludwigs Ensemble and more. Tampere Old Customs Hall and Club, 2-4 November, www.tampere.fi/jazz

Out There items for inclusion in the November issue should reach us by Friday 12 October. Fax +44 (0)20 7436 5769; submit@thewire.co.uk

Do not send e-mail addresses as attachments; they will be binned. All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone. □

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National

BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

JOHN PEEL

Tuesday-Thursday 10pm-midnight

The indie nation's bible

GILLIES PETERSON

Wednesday-midnight-2am Post-Apoc jazz

FABIO & GROOVERIDER

Friday 2-4am Hardcore drum 'n' bass

WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 9pm-midnight

Hip-hop legends

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday-midnight-2am Bass culture

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight

New Music compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10:30-11:30pm World Music

Blind Boys Of Alabama (12 October)

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-Late

Modern jazz in session and concert.

This month: Sonny Rollins (12 October), Wallace Roney (14), Andy Cyrille,

Reggie Workman, Oliver Lake (19)

WORLD ROUTES

Saturday 12pm

Lucy Duan presents a showcase of global music.

This month's specials: Lakshmi Shankar (13 October), Navroze Festival with Preeti Dave (27)

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 6-8:30pm

Ian Carr's documentary on Miles Davis continues

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11:15pm-Late New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight

Hip-hop/scenic mix of avant sounds

Regional

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The Wire's Steve Barker mixes it up wildlife

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PMS

Sunday-midnight-2am Eclectic mix of avant sounds

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Wednesday 7-10pm, Sunday 10pm-Late

Jazz and hip-hop

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
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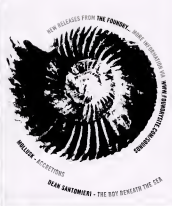


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Epiphanies

Clive Bell remembers the day he nearly joined Henry Cow



Legends in their own habitats: Henry Cow in 1974

It was a different world back then. It seems to me there was less of everything. Certainly less music. And what music there was came out of small radios. Or the enormous piano in the corner of the living room. To me, sitting underneath it as a child, the piano seemed vast, but in fact it was between a grand and a baby grand, a size termed a Boudoir, and I've never seen one since.

I grew up playing the flute in a remote Sussex village, in a house without any electricity. By day I tended a small herd of goats on the hillside, and improvised on the piccolo while ambling through fields of barley. OK, I made up the goats, but my point is that my exposure to either live or recorded music was minuscule until I arrived at college, in Cambridge, 1969. Here I was knocked sideways by an epiphany: series of concerts and encounters. Jethro Tull – the showmanship and sheer volume, the piano humour and musicianship, something like Ian Dury's *Shamanda* ten years later, Pink Floyd – Syd Barrett had just left, and they spun a sonic maelstrom round our heads, threatening to suck us all in. Karlheinz Stockhausen came to town and lectured about something similar. And the Incredible String Band played again and again, shambling across the stage between numbers because someone had to tune the zither played by Llorcone – was she the one that later became Mayor of Taunton? But we always forgave The String Band everything, because their music was subtle and whimsical, and because they embodied so many alternatives, so many rejections of things that had seemed important before. For example, that you must impress the audience with technical expertise (jazz), and you must play aggressive and loud (rock). These genre conventions were OK up to a point, and we all enjoyed a visit from Detroit's MC5 – like the self-flagellating initiates of an exhausting cult, they pounded out rock's underlying mystic till we were almost too numb to applaud. But the best groups defied these conventions, rewrote the rules, and were of course derided by many disappointed music fans. Notorious among Cambridge's homegrown groups was Henry Cow. Tim Hodgkinson (sax and organ) and Fred

Frith (guitar) had formed a six piece Dada blues group the year before, but by the time I saw them, the blues standards had moved to the encore list, and Henry Cow were a trio playing their own complex chamber rock compositions. John Greaves, a bass player with a fondness for the upper reaches of the instrument had joined; he also liked to sing the odd Frank Sinatra tribute. The group's reputation preceded them, in the sense that they annoyed the hell out of several people I knew. It was rock music of a sort, but there was no drummer, and they played sitting down. An exciting riff would appear, only to be dismissed after four bars in favour of a Weberian atonal melody in 13/8 time. No proper guitar solos, but melodies on the bass and abrasive improvising on sax. Instead of liquid slides and strobe lights, a tasselled standard lamp on stage. And a man ironing his clothes throughout the set.

I think the combination of playful and serious attracted me straight away. This was an honest music too, in that no one was posing or following a US rock style book. You didn't have to leave your brain in the dressing room, and the music told you that an interest in Messiaen and Hendrix might be compatible. You had to remember this was before 'Progressive rock', which always seemed to be about musicians who had had a lot of classical piano lessons and wanted to pump it up on stage in the overblown manner of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Henry Cow was more about questioning the separation of 20th century composition and rock, set in a context of happenings, psychedelia and street theatre. Becoming friends with this group made college life considerably more interesting. By this time my patience with Roman history seminars was wearing thin. I had a nasty case of mumps, which got me isolated in a hospital room, a small mirror on the opposite wall; I was told not to move my back. I also took part in performances of a Greek comedy, staged in ancient Greek of course, for which I played Frank Zappa-style flute music while suspended high above the stage, dressed as a bird, in a gently swaying cage. By the end of a week of this, I was staggering everywhere, affected by motion sickness and nausea.

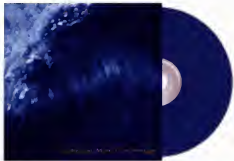
I started playing occasionally with Henry Cow, when there was room in the van. Fred Frith showed considerable generosity, or recklessness, by inviting me on stage for an improvised set when we hadn't even been properly introduced. He also played me a recording of Takemitsu's *November Steps*, and so I heard the sound of the shakuhachi for the first time. Meanwhile, Henry Cow searched for a drummer. Several were tried, but a remarkable musician was needed to render convincingly those constantly varying time signatures and tempi. And so it came to pass that Chris Cutler was auditioned (in 1972), and got the job, and I was excited to be present. Cutler announced he liked the group's "row", and immediately propelled them onto another level, a more extrovert mode of performance, maybe more accessible. 13/8 was meat and drink to Cutler, as was free improvising; and being suitably opinionated, he slotted well into the fierce debating society that the group became once onstage.

But did Henry Cow lose something by appointing a drummer? The first LP, *Legend*, was recorded with Cutler in 1973. Those pre-1972 concerts had a weird but warm chamber quality that I've never heard in another group. All three instruments had to state the complex rhythms with no percussive help. And then there's the feeble excitement of hearing a group early on, before they've really discovered what it is they do. Drummer or no drummer, the rock press gave Henry Cow a hard time, usually by fastidiously ignoring them. As Hanif Kureishi wrote, pop music is "a form crying out not to be written about". Some rock critics seemed to despise themselves for writing at all, and compensated by adopting a virile anti-intellectualism. Groups like Soft Machine and Henry Cow received a warmer welcome in Europe, where maybe there was less sense of shame at enjoying complex composition, improvisation and blues all at the same time. Or possibly they were suckers for pretentious nonsense? Whatever, I felt that an Englishman with a bit more cultural self-confidence, a bit less kowtowing to American models, would have taken Henry Cow more to its heart, would have been proud of producing something so odd and multi-coloured. □

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